

**CHURCH RENEWAL AND INTEGRATION  
A COLLABORATIVE  
APPROACH**

**Robert R. Cornelison**

**BA, Seattle Pacific University, 1990  
M.Div., United Theological Seminary, 2002**

**Mentor  
Kwame Adayomi, D.Min.**

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**ABSTRACT**  
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by

Robert R. Cornelison  
United Theological Seminary, 2005

Mentor

Kwame Adayomi, D.Min.

The goal of the projects was to bring church renewal and integration to Plainfield United Methodist Church, Grand Rapids, MI. The project was descriptive in nature in order to identify the key elements involved in successful collaborative ministries. The Generation-to-Generation Tutoring Program was the chosen collaborative ministry used to change the congregational culture by modeling ministry *with* the community rather than ministry *to* the community. The project found that by creating biblical community and using an incarnational approach to ministry the congregation was successfully renewed and ethnically integrated. Seven key elements for successful collaborative ministries were also identified.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I could not have completed this research without the encouragement and assistance of many people. I wish to thank my family and all the people who assisted me in the phenomenal challenge. I especially want to thank my wife, Joan, who put up with the long hours and encouraged me to get it done. I want to thank Dr. Bob Mayo for helping through the project design phase and for his wisdom, Dr. Michael Beggs for encouraging me and helping guide the theological reflection and Dr. C Edward Smyth for his guidance in this project and in life. I also what thank the people of Plainfield United Methodist Church who made this project possible. Lastly, I would like to thank the Context Associates, tutors and volunteers, without them this project would never happened.

## DEDICATION

To wife Joan and my girls, Makayla and Kelis, who sacrificed family time so that I could finish. Thank you for your love and support.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Mainline Protestant Denominations are in a state of decline, especially in the urban centers of the United States of America. Therefore, the context of this project is an urban congregation in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Plainfield United Methodist Church has been in decline for a number of decades. The goal of this project was to bring congregational renewal and ethnic integration. The hypothesis guiding this project is that congregational renewal comes from fulfilling the mission of Jesus Christ in the world; including both social action and evangelism. If this hypothesis proves to be true, the secondary hypothesis is the congregation should then become more representative of the surrounding community as they engage their neighbors with the holistic mission of Jesus Christ.

The following Doctor of Ministry project is descriptive in nature. The project has been designed to provide guidelines for congregations wanting to create collaborative ministries. To this end, Chapter Six provides seven key elements of collaborative ministries that congregations can utilize in creating collaborative ministries. The need for such guidance has been verified in the numerous requests received to share this information within congregations and an academic institution before this Thesis could be finalized. It is the hope of the author that the seven key elements of collaborative ministries will help urban congregations build the institutional capacity to fulfill the holistic mission of Jesus Christ in their unique contexts.

In order to understand the complexity of the ministry context, Chapter One addresses the community context, congregational context and the author's person context.

These three contexts work together to show the need and the assets available to support the development of a collaborative approach to congregational renewal and integration.

Chapter Two examines the relevant literature around three themes that are essential to the development of a ministry model that is the catalyst for congregation renewal and ethnic integration. This chapter examines theories of church renewal, collaboration, and diversity and integration.

Chapter Three supports the project hypothesis by discussing biblical, theological and historical examples of foundational theories that support the hypothesis and model.

Chapter Four is dedicated to the project design. This chapter defines both program and the overall project goals. Every project has a starting point. The theoretical presuppositions are stated and the congregations starting point is analyzed.

Chapter Five documents the progression of the project and analysis the data collected from the three research methods: numerical analysis of attendance records, a congregational survey and pastoral experience as recorded through a project journal.

Chapter Six reflects on the overall project while providing a summary and final conclusion. Seven key elements of collaborative ministry are developed that can guide other congregation in developing collaborative ministries.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **MINISTRY FOCUS**

Since the merger of the Methodist Episcopal and the Evangelical United Brethren Churches into the United Methodist church in 1968, this new denomination has experienced a steady rate of decline in the United States. Some regions of the country, such as the Western Jurisdiction and the North Central Jurisdiction, have lost 36% of the total membership since the merger. While other areas have not experienced such an accelerated rate of decline, the overall vitality and influence of the United Methodist Church nevertheless suffers.<sup>1</sup> Those congregations most affected by this sharp decline have been the urban and rural churches as people move from the older city neighborhoods and rural communities into the ever-expanding suburbs. The author has served both rural and urban churches and can verify that many issues are the same. However, while there are many similarities, the differences are too vast to incorporate both settings into this discussion. Therefore, the focus for this project is urban church renewal through a rediscovery of the biblical mission of the church and the belief that ethnic integration will follow as the congregation represents the community it serves. Since resources are limited in many urban congregations, a collaborative approach will be utilized to achieve church renewal and integration.

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<sup>1</sup> Walter W. Benjamin, "Thank God for Methodism 'Southern Captivity,'" *Good News Magazine*, May/June 2001.

The particular context of this project is Plainfield United Methodist Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan. At the start of this project, Plainfield United Methodist Church was a congregation that was nearly one hundred and twenty five years old. Founded on the outskirts of Grand Rapids, it is now in a transitional neighborhood adjacent to the city core. The once upper middle class, Caucasian, blue collar, Roman Catholic neighborhood is now an ethnically diverse community made up of immigrant Africans and Latinos, African-Americans, and poor blue collar Caucasians with a rapidly decreasing remnant of long-term residents.<sup>2</sup> The congregation itself has experienced steady decline since the 1968 race riots and the subsequent “white flight.” The result is a neighborhood characterized by short-term tenants and a rapidly changing community.<sup>3</sup> The membership of the congregation was one hundred and twenty-seven (127) with an average attendance of sixty (60) at the beginning of this project. Out of those who regularly attended, 50% are over seventy years of age and were a remaining representation of the neighborhood of the 1950s and 1960s. The remaining regular attendees were a diverse group ranging in age from two (2) to sixty-nine (69), poor to professional upper-middle class, and a mix of African, African-American, and Caucasian.<sup>4</sup> Over the past thirteen years, the average

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<sup>2</sup> UMC Community Profile: Zip Code 49505. Dayton, OH: Research Office, General Board of Global Ministries of the United Methodist church. November 2, 2001. This study identifies “Upscale Blue-Collars” as the number one Lifestyle (Prizm) group. However, by July 23, 2002, the Lifestyle (Prizm) that was in the number one position dropped approximately 500 households to the third position with 1,335 households in nine (9) months. See the entry below for reference.

<sup>3</sup> UMC Community Profile: Zip Code 49505. Dayton, OH: Research Office, General Board of Global Ministries of the United Methodist Church. July 23, 2002. This study shows that 49% of all residents in the zip code have been at their current address for less than five (5) years. An additional 12% have been in their homes less ten (10) years or less.

<sup>4</sup> Of the remaining 30 people, one (1) is African, six (6) African-American, and twenty-three (23) Caucasian. There are three (3) children, four (4) youth, three (3) in their late teens and twenties, five (5) in their thirties, and remaining fifteen (15) divided between the forties through sixties.

attendance has dropped from one hundred and thirty (130) to sixty (60).<sup>5</sup> If Plainfield United Methodist Church does not experience renewal, this shrinking congregation will no longer be able to maintain the large facilities, pay a full-time pastor, nor meet the increasing needs of the community.

In order to understand the complexity of the context and the need for congregational renewal and ethnic integration, the remaining chapter is divided into three sections. They are: 1) Community Context, 2) Congregational Context, and, 3) Personal Context. Furthermore, understanding these three areas is deeply theological in its own right and is at the heart of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Without an understanding of who we are as individuals and what we are called to do, there is no hope of experiencing the abundant life that Jesus Christ calls us to in John 10:10, or as Craig Dykstra and Dorothy C. Bass state in their article “A Theological Understanding of Christian Practices”:

Because the circumstances in which human beings live are always concrete, conflicted, and in flux, those who seek to live faithfully must necessarily wonder where and how to discern the specific shape that a way of life abundant might take in a given time and place. What moves do people make as they encounter one another in the context of God’s grace? What words do they say, what gestures do they perform, what relationships do they enter? These questions may be asked consciously, or they may be implicit in the day-to-day decisions of a community, but they are surely somewhere in play, for the contours of a life-giving way of life are usually not readily apparent.<sup>6</sup>

A life of ministry is a life that embraces this ambiguity while trying to faithfully discern God’s direction within the communities we serve. The alternative is to pilfer another’s

<sup>5</sup> UMC Local Church Profile: Plainfield Avenue United Methodist Church (Dayton, OH: Research Office, General Board of Global Ministries of the United Methodist Church, November 2, 2001).

<sup>6</sup> Craig Dykstra and Dorothy C. Bass, “A Theological Understanding of Christian Practices,” *Practical Theology Beliefs and Practices in Christian Faith*, Miroslav Volf and Dorothy C. Bass, ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002), 15.

model of ministry that emerged out of their faithful struggling within their context and attempt to transplant it into an alien context. As the above quote suggests, this is neither faithful nor life-giving since it did not emerge from within community's own time and place.

### **Community Context**

Grand Rapids, Michigan is an evangelical stronghold in America. The community is heavily influenced by the Christian Reformed Church (C.R.C.) and the Reformed Church of America (R.C.A.). The C.R.C. and the R.C.A. have their international headquarters within the Grand Rapids Metropolitan Area along with both traditions' preeminent seminaries—Calvin Seminary for the C.R.C. and Western Theological Seminary for the R.C.A. In addition, Backer Book House, Zondervan Publishing and W. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company are also located within the Grand Rapids Metropolitan Area. Furthermore, the international headquarters of Alticor, the parent company of Amway, is in the area and has heavily influenced the evangelical culture of the community.

The discussion on community resources will examine two geographic areas to highlight the community context. The first geographic area is the City of Grand Rapids. The second is a customized area within the City of Grand Rapids that is defined by the traditional boundaries of the core membership of Plainfield United Methodist Church.

#### **City of Grand Rapids**

There are two major issues that permeate urban life within Grand Rapids—substandard public schools and ethnic segregation. While each of these issues will be discussed separately, both are inseparable from the influences and consequences of the

other. They will be discussed in the order listed above. The focus will then shift to a demographic analysis of the community surrounding Plainfield United Methodist Church.

Like many urban school systems, Grand Rapids Public Schools struggle to provide an adequate education to inner-city children. It is not an easy task, but in Grand Rapids it is made more difficult by the withdrawal of most of the Christian Reformed Church's membership from public schools. The C.R.C. has a long tradition of emphasizing its own Christian School system. Therefore, because of the large number of C.R.C. households in Grand Rapids, there is not the local support of the public schools. Why would someone vote for a property tax increase for public schools when they are paying tuition at a private school? The Grand Rapids Public Schools are in deep trouble and are in danger of losing the ability to make local decisions if student performance does not substantially improve.

Grand Rapids Public Schools' own literature says it clearly:

There can be little argument that the Grand Rapids Public Schools must undergo formidable change and improvement or face potential elimination as a school system as it currently exists. All urban schools, including Grand Rapids Public Schools, face daunting educational and social issues. Tremendous changes have occurred in our cities that impact our community and our schools.<sup>7</sup>

There are a number of indicators of how poorly Grand Rapids Public Schools are performing the important task of educating the city's young people. First, 18.2% of Grand Rapids Public School students read significantly below their age level.<sup>8</sup> Second, 69.4% of Grand Rapids Public School students come from economically disadvantaged homes.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> "The 'New' Grand Rapids Public Schools," (Grand Rapids, MI: Grand Rapids Public Schools, 2004), 2.

<sup>8</sup> *Report to the Community 2003* (Grand Rapids: Grand Rapids Public Schools, 2004), 4.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

Grand Rapids Public School has a ratio of 1:726.2 guidance counselors to students.<sup>10</sup>

Finally, only 32.2% of the students within the Grand Rapids Public School system pass the Michigan Education Assessment Program (MEAP) Test. The MEAP Test is represents the minimal standard accepted within the State of Michigan.

As can be seen from the quote above, the Grand Rapids Public School administrators would like to spin the data to suggest that Grand Rapids Public Schools are no different than any other urban Michigan school district. This is not the case. Standard and Poor's continues to report on the Grand Rapids Public Schools that, relative to other school districts in Michigan, Grand Rapids Public School's have a history of generating below-average student results.<sup>11</sup> This paper will now address one of the root causes of this dismal performance by the Grand Rapids Public Schools, namely segregation.

Grand Rapids is known as a segregated city. There are a number of ways to study segregation within a geographic area. First, while not scientific in method but nevertheless useful, drive through the community paying attention to what ethnic groups live in each area. Second, examine the city's minority population in comparison to the county (read suburbs) minority population. Third, examine other demographic indicators provided by the 2000 Census and other local and State agencies. This paper will rely on all three methods in order to understand the significant problem the City of Grand Rapids has with segregation. While these methods are all valid, it would be amiss not to remind readers that these statistics are lived by people that experience limitations, rejection and disenfranchisement based on nothing more than their skin color.

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Standard and Poor, "Grand Rapids Public Schools," Schoolmatters, [http://www.schoolmatters.com/pdf/reports/MI/D/982000/D982000-grand\\_rapids\\_public\\_schools.pdf](http://www.schoolmatters.com/pdf/reports/MI/D/982000/D982000-grand_rapids_public_schools.pdf), (accessed November 21, 2005).

Driving through the streets of Grand Rapids, one is struck by how segregated the neighborhoods have become. Hispanics, African-Americans, and Polish all have their own neighborhoods. The Southwest quadrant of the city is overwhelmingly Hispanic. The Northwest quadrant of the city is overwhelmingly Polish. The first fifteen blocks of the Southeast quadrant of the city are overwhelmingly African-American. While these communities offer a sense of familiarity and safety, it must be noted that in 2002, the Fair Housing Center of Greater Grand Rapids received sixty-two complaints of racial discrimination.<sup>12</sup> The question must be asked: "is this segregation voluntary or forced?"

As stated above, one way to measure racial or ethnic segregation is to compare a city's minority population to that of the surrounding county. This is an important statistic because it reflects the demographic make up of most of our urban centers in the United States: the county surrounding any larger city is made up primarily of the city's suburbs. According to the 2000 Census, Grand Rapids has a minority population of 32.7% while Kent County has a minority population of 19.9%. The city has 15.8 more percentage points of minority citizens than Kent County or a 93.5% difference.<sup>13</sup> In comparison, Detroit has an 81.6% difference, Kalamazoo has an 89.6% difference, Battle Creek has a 57% difference, and Flint has a 137.2% difference.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Fair Housing Center of Greater Grand Rapids, "Basis of 2002 Housing Discrimination Complaints" *Fair Housing News*, Fall (2003): 2.

<sup>13</sup> Public Sector Consultants, Inc. *Status of Michigan Cities: An Index of Well-Being*. (Lansing, MI: Michigan Bipartisan Urban Caucus and the Michigan Economic and Environmental Roundtable, April 2002), 14.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

The City of Grand Rapids has a racial/ethnic composition of 67% Caucasian, 1% Native American, 2% Asian, 20% African-American, 13% Hispanic, 3% Multi-Ethnic, and 7% other.<sup>15</sup> The above provides a baseline for the following discussion.

According to the Johnson Center and Grand Valley State University, 35% of the people of West Michigan reported feeling discriminated again based on race/ethnicity in 2003.<sup>16</sup> West Michigan is ranked among the most “hyper-segregated” regions in the United States.<sup>17</sup> 70% of Caucasians live on a city block where there is less then 10% minority population.<sup>18</sup> One of the main problems with the Grand Rapids Public Schools is that 81% of the teachers are Caucasian while 74% of the students are of color.<sup>19</sup> Lastly, 61% of Kent County Jail’s inmate population in 2001 were minorities.

The issues facing the Grand Rapids Public Schools are based in the segregated legacy of West Michigan. Some indicators show that the Grand Rapids Area is becoming less segregated—the 1990 Census showed that the difference in minority population between the City of Grand Rapids and Kent County was 106.1%.<sup>20</sup> A new generation continues to be shaped by segregation and disenfranchisement.

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<sup>15</sup> Grand Rapids Area Center for Ecumenism, “State of Race in Grand Rapids.” Presented at the Summit on Racism 2005, March 2005.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Public Sector Consultants, *Michigan Cities*, 14.

## Plainfield U. M. C. Neighborhood

Plainfield Untied Methodist Church is on the boarder between two zip codes within the city: 49505 and 49503. Because of the Plainfield United Methodist Church's location, United States census information can be misleading without defining and then condensing data from a geographical area that represents the people the congregation serves. To better understand the demographics within the geographic area that the congregation serves, a Custom Polygon was ordered from Precept. The geographic area along with a visual breakdown of the projected population growth is shown below.

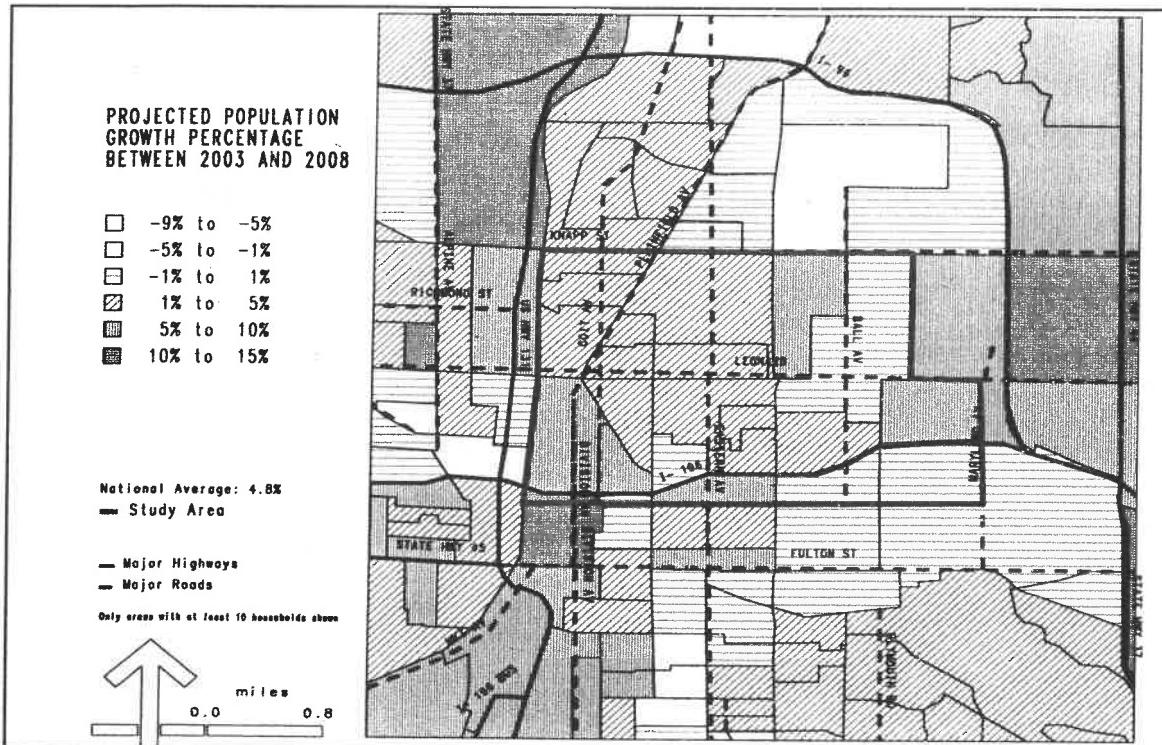


Figure 1. Projected Population Growth Percentage.

As stated above, the neighborhood surrounding Plainfield Untied Methodist Church is in transition. The same is true of the geographic area included in the Custom Polygon that identifies the people the congregation serves. There are a number of

indicators that are relevant to the selection of the Generation-to-Generation Tutoring Program as the ministry project for this thesis and as a means for the congregation to connect with the surrounding community, they are: 1) population by race/ethnicity; 2) generational comparison to national averages; 3) comparison of education completed by adults to the national average; 4) marital status compared to the national average; and, 5) a comparison of households with children to the national average.

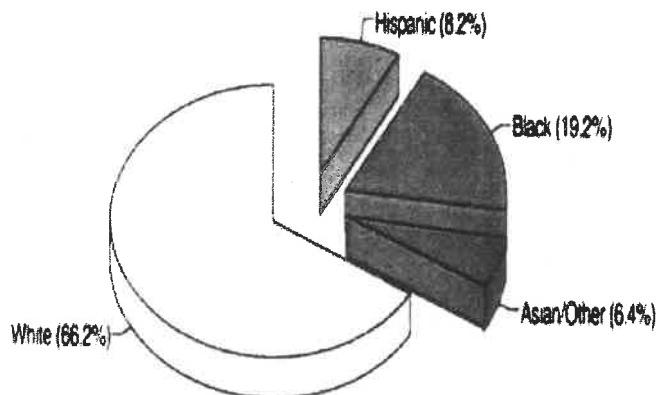


Figure 2. Population by Ethnicity.

The ethnic population that Plainfield United Methodist Church serves is changing and is projected to continue to change over the next five years. Figure 2 above shows the population divided by ethnicity in 2003. However the projected changes are as follows: 1) the White population is projected to decrease from 66.2% to 60.9%; 2) the Black population is projected to increase from 19.2% to 21.9%; 3) the Hispanic population is projected to increase from 8.2% to 10.0%; and, 4) the Asian/Other population is projected to increase from 6.4% to 7.2%.<sup>21</sup>

The average age in the United States of America is projected to rise over the next five years from 36.5 to 37.1. As the Baby Boomer generation ages there will be a strain on

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<sup>21</sup> Precept, *Ministry Area Profile*, ID#29798:72441, (prepared 11/19/03), 2.

many national resources. However, within the geographic area served by Plainfield United Methodist Church, the percentage of Boomers and Silents is lower than the national average, 23% and 33.1% respectively. As Figure 3 shows, the opposite is true regarding Millennials, Survivors and Builders with above average representation of 9.2%, 24.3% and 6.4% respectively.<sup>22</sup>

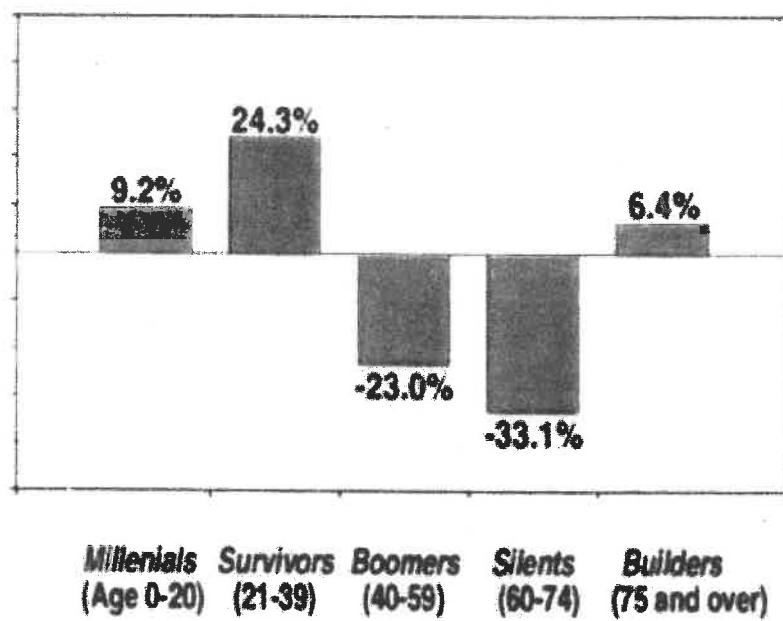


Figure 3. Percentage by Generation.

The educational levels of the surrounding community are slightly better than the national average with a 1.2% greater completion rate of at least grade school and a 4% higher high school graduation rate. Additionally, there is a 22% higher rate of college attendance in the surveyed area, but college graduation rates are 21.4% lower than the national average.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

The last two categories are the most alarming. Compared to the national averages there are 30.2% more singles, 17.1% fewer married people and 9.1% more divorced or widowed people in the survey area.<sup>24</sup> Coupled with the comparison between households with children that shows that the survey area has 62.8% more single female households and 15% more single male households than the national average, there are many children that are under parented.<sup>25</sup>

The above demographic indicators paint the picture of a young population that is ethnically diverse. Children in the neighborhood are under parented and need significant and safe adult relationships that will help guide them through the turbulent years of adolescence. In addition, the demographics indicate an adult population that wants to better themselves through education but lack resources to follow through with that desire.

### **Congregation Context**

When the author started the appointment at Plainfield Untied Methodist Church on July 1, 2002, he was filled with excitement and expectation. Before his official arrival, he had driven around the neighborhood a number of times and saw a neighborhood in transition and in decline. He saw a community that needed a church that would share the love of Jesus Christ and a church that desperately needed to reach out to the community in order to survive. He resisted to urge to make generalizations based on his observations alone, but he allowed his observations to guide the demographic research and shape the question asked of present and former members of the congregation to understand their self perception.

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

To study the congregation, the book *Studying Congregations: A New Handbook* by Nancy T. Ammerman, Jackson W. Carroll, Carl S. Dudley, and William McKinney was used. The authors use a number of “frames” or “lenses” to gather information about a congregation. This study used two “frames” to gather information about Plainfield United Methodist Church and to guide project selection and development: the Resource Frame and the Process Frame. Each “frame” will be summarized along with the relevant information.

### Resource Frame

The resource frame focuses on the collection of elements that all congregations have that provide the capacity for them accomplish social and religious change.<sup>26</sup> While many congregations perceive their lack of capacity in this area as a hindrance to ministry, it is the author’s assertion that all congregations have the resources needed to accomplish the ministry to which Christ has called them. Therefore, it is of the utmost importance to understand what resources a congregation has and what it does not have. By utilizing the principles of asset-based community development, one can then begin to build off a congregation’s strengths.

Plainfield United Methodist Church is a congregation of many assets. The building has been maintained throughout the generations, is paid off and is located on the main North-South avenue of the city providing excellent exposure. The facility itself was well designed with a large Fellowship Hall and magnificent kitchen and most of the large

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<sup>26</sup> Nancy T. Ammerman, Jackson W. Carroll, Carl S. Dudley, and William McKinney, eds. *Studying Congregations: A New Handbook*. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1998), 132.

classrooms have their own bathrooms. In addition, the facility is mostly handicapped accessible.

Any congregation's primary strength comes from the people that the Lord has led into that particular family. The strength of the people at Plainfield United Methodist Church is attested to in their perseverance through a fifty-year decline of the congregation and the neighborhood. While there are some people who had given up and were no longer willing to try to reach the community, the majority of people still had faith that they could once again be a strong neighborhood church. Therefore, this core group of people was able to maintain the ministries of the church with their time, talents and treasures. The congregation already had a small group of African Americans and Caucasians that were building bridges toward ethnic integration, there were people interested in creating a computer learning center and people interested in feeding the hungry. The Lord had already provided the people, location and passion for many of the components necessary to establish a collaborative approach to church renewal and integration. However, it is important to note that this core was also getting older and physically tired while at the same time they found it difficult to understand the need to try new approaches to ministry.

The most important asset that Plainfield United Methodist Church has is its Methodist/Wesleyan heritage. This heritage will be discussed further in Chapter Three. This heritage and the legacy of the Methodist people that has proceeded this present generation demands that the congregation respond to the needs of the community and empower them through education and skill training while sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ. To this end, Plainfield United Methodist Church had already started, over twenty-seven years earlier, an outreach ministry named North End Community Ministry (NECM)

that provided food, clothing and basic human assistance in the name of Jesus Christ to the people of Northeast Grand Rapids.

Plainfield United Methodist Church has been poised as a transformational congregation within the Creston Neighborhood of Grand Rapids, Michigan. The congregation has the facility, a core group of devoted people, and the heritage or DNA that demands holistic ministry. While Plainfield United Methodist Church possesses significant assets that can be used in ministry, they also have a significant history that has paralyzed them for a number of years. Plainfield United Methodist Church's paralyzing history will be examined next using the Process Frame as a Reference.

#### Process Frame

On arriving at Plainfield United Methodist Church on July 1, 2002, the author was confronted by a church that was nearly financially bankrupt. While the building was paid off and there were no significant bills, the monthly operating expenses that included salaries, utilities and ministry expenses had eroded the financial base of the congregation. After crunching the numbers and figuring out what restrictions were placed on what monies, it became evident that unless there were significant changes in the spending habits of the congregation they would not be able to meet the monthly expenses within five months. Furthermore, after looking through the previous five years of Treasurer's Reports, it was evident that this deficit spending had been going on for at least five years. As a result of this financial crisis and the congregation's ability to ignore long-term deficit spending, the author had to work with the Trustees and Church Council to enact momentous changes in the way the congregation spent money and went about doing ministry. The author knew these financial decisions would define his ministry at Plainfield

United Methodist Church, but he was not prepared for the immediate and hostile reaction he received. By making these momentous changes, the author had changed the way the congregation lived out their communal faith. The reactions made it clear that the underlying processes that defined Plainfield United Methodist Church had been disrupted.

Ammerman, Carroll, Dudley and McKinny define the Process Frame in the following manner:

The process frame calls attention to the underlying flow and dynamics of a congregation that knit together its common life and shaped its morale and climate. Process perspective asks how leadership is exercised and shared, how decisions are made, how communication occurs, and how conflicts are managed and problems are solved . . . Congregations have their own dynamics of power and patterns of relationship, often like family systems of interdependence.<sup>27</sup>

In other words, the process frame helps the researcher identify the congregational narrative that shapes the identity of that community. These stories create the script that the community unknowingly follows as characters in an ongoing story.

Leonora Tibbs Tisdale, in her book *Preaching as Local Theology and Folk Art* encourages pastors to exegete the congregational stories in the same way as pastors are instructed to exegete the biblical text.<sup>28</sup> The stories that the congregation of Plainfield United Methodist Church retell as part of their shared experience have to do with isolation, distrust, abandonment and conflict.

One of the most powerful stories of Plainfield United Methodist Church has already been mentioned as a fifty-year history of decline. A congregation that had standing room only in the early 1960's, slowly lost people year after year. The result has been a

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 15-16.

<sup>28</sup> Leonora Tibbs Tisdale, *Preaching as Local Theology and Folk Art* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1997), xii.

fierce determination to hold the core group of people together at all costs. However, due to this unhealthy inward focus on the congregation, evangelistic ministries and neighborhood involvement slowly faded as the neighborhood changed due to “white flight” and economic divestment. It became more important to maintain the core groups comfort level than to fulfill the mission of Jesus Christ. Two representative stories will be that will illustrate this tendency toward isolation.

In the late 1999, a Hispanic church was trying to connect with the growing Hispanic population in the neighborhood. They approached the pastor at the time who was excited about the possibility of supporting a Hispanic congregation and gaining some needed financial support. After taking the opportunity to the Administrative Board, the congregation decided that they would not pursue this opportunity. The official reason given was the possibility of building damage with increased use. The unofficial reason manifested itself when it was suggested to let an African-American congregation use the building. In short, the reason given was that “we already decided that we do not want ‘those people’ to use our building.” These stories of isolation shaped the congregation’s responses to many opportunities that could have reenergized Plainfield United Methodist Church. Up until this project, the people of Plainfield United Methodist Church had repeatedly chosen isolation over engagement.

Another example of the isolation of Plainfield from the existing community is illustrated by the approach to ministry that was observed by the author upon arrival. One ongoing program was Second Saturday Supper. Second Saturday Supper was an attempt to reach out to the surrounding community by providing a free supper once a month to the neighborhood. While the congregation’s attempt was admirable, their long-term isolation from the surrounding community was clearly seen as the congregation served the

community but never interacted with them on a personal level. In fact, the congregation stayed behind the serving tables and dished out food to the community they were trying to serve without meaningful contact or conversation. This approach to ministry will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Four.

The stories of distrust and abandonment emerge out of the same set of historical events but over the years have grown into a mild form of group paranoia toward pastors and the Conference. The historical events that triggered this group paranoia are the frequent pastoral changes and the repeated changes in direction that always accompany leadership change. The general feeling of the congregation is that the Conference uses Plainfield as a testing ground for new pastors and for new programs and then moves the pastors on leaving the congregation to pick up the pieces. In recent years, the congregation's fears were felt to be justified since they were sent three women pastors, an African-American pastor and now a pastor married to a Black woman. While many congregations when through difficulties adjusting to female pastors, Plainfield United Methodist Church chose to interpret the events in a way that made them the abandoned and mistreated victim. The end result was mistrust of their pastors and passive-aggressive approach to conflict resolution.

The ongoing entrenched feelings of abandonment and distrust that shaped the culture of Plainfield United Methodist Church can be illustrated by the congregation's distrust and suspicion of the West Michigan Conference even as the congregation received numerous grants to keep the doors open and start new ministries. The congregation could never accept that the Conference wanted to help create a healthy ministry. The congregation's mantra was "the Conference does not care about us."

Plainfield United Methodist Church is a congregation trapped in the unhealthy stories they tell about themselves and their relationship with the community and the Conference. These stories must be rewritten if Plainfield United Methodist Church will ever become a vibrant church that serves the surrounding community.

### **Personal Context**

The most often overlooked resource that we all must take into account is one's own personal experience. It is through one's personal experience that one understands one's call, one's passion, and one's responsibility as a child of God. For example, Jesus himself said, "For you will always have the poor with you."<sup>29</sup> Often, many Christians have used Jesus' words out of context to justify personal inaction in relieving the suffering of the poor and marginalized. However, within the context of the narrative it is clear that Jesus is telling the disciples that there will always be time for ministry to the poor and marginalized and that the woman that anointed Jesus with the pure nard was acting out of her passion and desire to please Jesus. In other words, the Holy Spirit leads us through our passions and experience to fulfill our unique calling within the kingdom of God.

The author's passion emerges out of three experiences that have worked together to shape his ministry at Plainfield United Methodist Church and his ministry as a whole. These three experiences, some positive and some negative, continue to shape the author's ministry even after this project has been completed. These three experiences are: 1)

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<sup>29</sup> Mark 14:7 (NRSV)

participation in a declining denomination; 2) participation in authentic biblical community; and 3) a past experience of collaborative ministry.

The state of decline of the United Methodist Church is described at the beginning of this chapter. This state of decline has a personal affect on the members that have been faithfully committed to the denomination. The author is a convert to the United Methodist Church from the Lutheran tradition and, as such, is passionately committed to the denomination that has embraced him over the past twelve years. However, during those twelve years, the visible decline has been personally depressing. Why are people rejecting a tradition that has been so personally fulfilling? Why does it seem that the United Methodist Church is not relevant the younger generations? These are a couple questions that have driven this project from its inception and are a continual theme in the author's ministry.

Through a personal struggle with dyslexia, the author struggled academically through high school. Therefore, college was a formative experience. Not only did the author spend the time to catch up academically with the rest of his classmates, but due to a negative relationship with his father, God brought healing to his wounded heart through numerous positive relationships. One of the relationships that God used to bring about a profound change was a relationship with Dr. C. Edward Smyth, a professor at Seattle Pacific University. Dr. Smyth became a surrogate father and taught the author how to live within biblical Christian community.

The second experience that is relevant to this project is the author's relationship with Dr. C. Edward Smyth. Dr. Smyth had a long tradition at Seattle Pacific University of inviting juniors and seniors that were serious about living their Christian faith to be part of

a men's fellowship group that he conducted weekly at his house. The author was invited during his last full year at Seattle Pacific University to take part in this group.

Many young men grow up without their fathers in the home or with their fathers being emotionally and physically absent due to their commitment to their careers. The author's father was part of his life until he was seven years old. He then left the family for a couple of years to pursue schooling to become a Certified Public Accountant. After passing the test, he took a job one hundred and eighty miles away from the rest of family and only came home on weekends for a couple more years. After nearly four years of little contact, the family was reunited, but there continued to be a feeling of disconnectedness that the author felt from his father. During the author's childhood, his father repeatedly took jobs away from the family and they only saw him on weekends or sometimes only every six months. This feeling of disconnectedness did not go away until the last six months of the author's father's life.

Dr. Smyth met the author during a tumultuous time in his life. It was during the college years that many people start to question the values, morals and identity that they had inherited from their family of origin. This process was made more traumatic for the author since he had no positive father figure to guide him. Weekly professional counseling was utilized to help sort out feelings of abandonment and trust, but the author needed a safe person with whom he could risk opening up. It was during this time that Dr. Smyth came alongside the author as his surrogate father. He put his arm around the author one day at the men's fellowship group and said: "What you need is a surrogate father. From this point on, I am your surrogate father." This was just what was needed to feel safe and take a chance. Over the years, Dr. Smyth has continued to be there and to be the example of what it means to be a minister of the gospel, a godly man, and a Christian husband and

father. This experience continues to shape the author's model of ministry as well as this project. It is within community that one can find those meaningful relationships that incarnate the love of Jesus Christ and bring positive changes to people's lives.

In addition to the role Dr. Smyth had in the author's life on the personal and professional levels, the men's fellowship group itself changed his approach to ministry as he lived in biblical Christian community with a group of men. It was here that the author learned social skills and was supported through tumultuous times through a covenant of love, openness, accountability, availability and confidentiality, among others. The author learned that the Christian faith is much easier when one is journeying with others in community. The author learned what it means to deny oneself for others and how to trust and confront in love. The author leaned how to stay in relationship with people even when they disappoint and fail. In short, this fellowship group provided an experience of what the church can become if people take their commitment to one another seriously and reach out in love.

The third experience in the author's journey that has concluded in this project is a ministerial experiment in renewal and collaboration while a working as a youth pastor in Seattle, Washington. While working for Seattle Area Youth for Christ in a church partnership with Glendale Evangelical Lutheran Church, five churches collaborated to provide a ministry to Generation X Christians and to reach out to the surrounding community. This experiment was birthed out of necessity while struggling with the lack of resources. However, a basic framework was provided through the partnership program in which the author was already a participant.

Five churches came together in a ministry called *The Colony*, based on Philippians 3:20. The tagline of the *The Colony* was, "a fellowship of resident aliens." The basic

premise was to consolidate the few Generation X members of each church to offer relevant discipleship ministries and to evangelize the young adults in the community. While this ministry was birthed out of necessity and desperation, it ultimately failed due to lack of structure and focus. However, the experience convinced the author of the workability of collaborative ministry if one was able to first define those key elements that are necessary if collaboration will be successful.

These three experiences: 1) participation in a declining denomination; 2) participation in authentic biblical community; and 3) a past experience of collaborative ministry have shaped the author's ministerial philosophy and, therefore, every program that has been developed since. This Doctor of Ministry project involving church renewal and integration is no exception. These three experiences guided the program selection, development and evaluation of the project.

## Synergy

After conducting intermediate demographic research and numerous informal interviews with community leaders and going through a time of personal reflection, the project started to come into focus through a time of theological reflection on the nature of the Church of Jesus Christ. The congregation needed to experience renewal and needed to connect with the integrated neighborhood surrounding the congregation. It was also evident that Plainfield United Methodist Church was confused about the congregation's role in the neighborhood. It became apparent that some type of vehicle needed to be created that would become a catalyst of congregational renewal. Due to the substandard education available through the Grand Rapids Public School and connection with a college ministry named Generation-to-Generation Ministries, it was decided that the program

vehicle would be a tutoring program named the Generation-to-Generation Tutoring Program.

The Generation-to-Generation Tutoring Program was prompted through an introduction to J. R. Pittman, the Executive Director of Generation-to-Generation Ministries. The author and J. R. Pittman met at a mutual friend's insistence to discuss possible ways of supporting each other since each have similar visions and ministry philosophies. The primary reason the Generation-to-Generation Ministry was selected as a collaborator is their commitment to working only within the accountability and biblical authority of the local congregation. The Generation-to-Generation Tutoring Program is described in detail in Chapter Four. See Appendix A for more information regarding Generation-to-Generation Ministries.

The author knew that the focus of the Doctor of Ministry Project needed to be renewal of the congregation known as Plainfield United Methodist Church. However, it became clear that some type of collaboration or partnership would need to take place due to the lack of human and financial resources. Furthermore, when the author started to research collaborative approaches to ministry, there were extremely limited resources available to guide congregations through the collaborative process. It was then decided that Generation-to-Generation Ministries and Plainfield United Methodist Church would enter into a collaborative program that would address the needs of both organizations. The Doctor of Ministry Project would then be descriptive in nature so that other congregation could duplicate the collaborative process.

By using collaboration as the basis for the Generation-to-Generation Tutoring Program both parties have the potential to meet their individual objectives. Generation-to-Generation Ministries would be able to place college students in local congregations and

provide opportunities for the students to use their gifts and passion in serve to the Church. Plainfield United Methodist Church would gain college students willing to work within the tutoring program and energize the ageing congregation. In addition, both organizations would build their individual financial capacities as they both become eligible for numerous grants that require collaboration.

### **Conclusion**

Plainfield United Methodist Church is a struggling congregation that has experienced fifty years of slow decline and is in need of renewal. In addition, the neighborhood surrounding Plainfield United Methodist Church is one of the few integrated neighborhoods in Grand Rapids, and yet the congregation was made up predominately of Caucasian members. The goal of the Doctor of Ministry Project is to bring renewal to Plainfield United Methodist Church. In order to accomplish this goal, a collaborative ministry, the Generation-to-Generation Tutoring Program, was selected with the two principle collaborators being Plainfield United Methodist Church and Generation-to-Generation Ministries. The Tutoring Program, however, functions only as a catalysis that will create the moment to bring renewal and integration to the congregation.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **THE STATE OF THE ART IN THIS MINISTRY MODEL**

Now that the context of ministry has been evaluated and the need for congregational renewal and integration has been established, it became necessary to explore a number of topics that relate to designing a model of ministry. This chapter will discuss a number of schools of thought regarding congregational renewal. Chapter Three will lay out an argument for doctrinal renewal as the guiding philosophy for this project focused on congregational renewal. However, each school discussed in this chapter has something to add to the discussion. The conversation will then turn to a discussion around the issues that influence integration and multi-cultural congregations, namely diversity, multiculturalism and then collaboration. It is the unique combination of these approaches that make the Generation-to-Generation Tutoring Program and the congregational renewal process at Plainfield United Methodist Church an innovative approach.

#### **Church Renewal**

Much has been presented through dissertations, articles, books and essays in the area of congregational renewal. Over the past fifty years, theories have come and gone. Some have had a dramatic and lasting impact on local congregations, and others have been less noteworthy. This section will examine a number of those theories that have had lasting impacts. The discussion will start by examining liberation theology in general, and then

move to two representative subcategories that have had a profound impact upon local congregations, namely Black Theology and Feminist Theology. The discussion will then turn to Liturgical Renewal, Charismatic Renewal, Process Theology and Secularization, and then the Church Growth Movement.

### Liberation Theology

Liberation Theology was birthed out of the pain of oppression in South America. The groundbreaking work in the field was *Theology of Liberation* by a Roman Catholic Priest named Gustavo Gutierrez. Liberation theology is based on Marxist philosophy but ultimately is about bringing hope to the poor and powerless within oppressive societies. There are four themes within Liberation Theology that will illuminate the influence of Marxism while summarizing the major themes of the movement. These themes are: 1) Commitment or *Compromiso*; 2) Hope; 3) The presence of God; and 4) God's preferential option for the poor.<sup>1</sup>

*Compromiso* is the Spanish word that means commitment. However, this commitment is not without cost. It means taking a stand for those things that are really important. It means risking one's health and welfare for those things that one believes are eternal and that further the reign of God.

The only way that *compromiso* works is if one has hope for a new and better reality. Hope is a compelling and sometimes dangerous force that allows people to see new possibilities and to throw off their limitations or oppression while striving for what

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<sup>1</sup> Robert McAfee Brown, *Liberation Theology: An Introductory Guide* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993), 27-33. Brown is relying heavily on the works of Gustavo Gutierrez but is summarizing the themes of the movement as a whole.

can be. In Liberation Theology, hope is firmly grounded in the incarnation of Jesus Christ and the reign of God that is here but yet to come.

Hope, therefore, is ultimately connected to the third theme: the presence of God. “The reason that strong *compromiso* and deeply grounded hope is that the people recognize that they are not alone, that God is in their midst—God working with them, and calling on them to work with God.”<sup>2</sup> God is working in the lives of many people and ultimately in and through the person of Jesus of Nazareth.

God’s preferential option for the poor is one of the most controversial aspects of Liberation Theology. The preferential option for the poor is firmly rooted in the biblical tradition of both the Old and New Testaments. However, it is commonly misunderstood to mean God is only interested in or on the side of the poor. God does not choose the poor exclusively but is for justice, mercy, compassion and liberation of all people.<sup>3</sup> Liberation Theology is about liberation and salvation of the whole society and yet it recognizes that this liberation must start from the bottom and subvert the culture rather than wait for those in power to make just changes, or as Robert McAfee Brown states:

Pressure from below will be resisted if they threaten the survival of social structures that bring substantial benefit to those on top. Such changes as are achieved are likely to be little more than cosmetic and token.<sup>4</sup>

The “bottom up” approach to liberation is a fundamental attribute of Liberation Theology. However, Liberation Theology is about more than social change. It is about holistic change or salvation of a culture. This salvation has three levels: 1) liberation from

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 47.

unjust social structures; 2) liberation from the power of fate; and, 3) liberation from personal sin and guilt. The discussion will now turn to two categories within Liberation Theology that use the same presuppositions but have differing criteria for defining oppression.

### Black Theology

Black Theology emerged out of the segregation and oppression within the United States of America and the hope that erupted forth during the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s. James H. Cone, the best-known voice of Black Theology today, states:

They [Black theologians] believed that God was involved in the revolution that was erupting in America, and their task was that of identifying God's liberation presence in the events so they could announce the coming kingdom of freedom and participate in its implementation.<sup>5</sup>

Black Theology shares the presuppositions of Liberation Theology but makes the assertion that God makes a preferential option for Black people.

While Black Theology has been the voice of liberation within the African-American community, the model has been rejected as the basis for this project for a number of reasons. First, as will be explained later, because of the limitation within the self-defined dialogue of all Liberation theologies. Second, because of the demographic make-up of the existing congregation and the community that is served, a model is needed

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<sup>5</sup> James H. Cone, *For My People: Black Theology and the Black Church* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1984).

that can shape two ethnic groups into a positive community. In other words, an ethnocentric model may divide rather than unite.<sup>6</sup>

### Feminist Theology

Feminist Theology asserts that the greatest injustice in the world is the oppression of woman. This oppression can take the form of physical violence but the most pervasive forms are institutional structures that keep women down. According to Rosemary Radford Ruether, one of the most insidious structures is that of language. She writes,

Language is the prime reflection of the power of the ruling group to define reality in its own terms and demote oppressed groups into invisibility. Woman, more than any other group, are overwhelmed by linguistic forms that exclude them from visible existence.<sup>7</sup>

Ruether asserts that “The liberation of all human relations from the false polarities of masculinity and femininity must also shape new a relationship of humanity to nature.”<sup>8</sup> In other words, the oppressive structure of patriarchy is so pervasive that it shapes all areas of human existence. If humanity is to be liberated, patriarchy and all the ramifications of this pervasive system will need to be discarded in favor of matriarchal structures.

<sup>6</sup> James Breckenridge, and Lillian Breckenridge, *What Color is Your God? Multiculturalism Education in the Church, Examining Christ and Culture in Light of the Changing Face of the Church* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books/SP Publishing, 1995), 77. “Although ethnocentric attitudes may have their origin in loyalty to one’s ancestral history, the end result may be negative interethnic relations. We may, for example, be so involved in our own heritage that we fail to understand or appreciate those from other backgrounds. Even worse we may tend to judge others by the characteristics of our own culture.” While there is a great deal of merit in Black Theology, it is ultimately a call that needs to be made by the leadership team within a congregation. At Plainfield United Methodist Church, since the original congregation was predominantly Caucasian, it was decided to use the lessons found in Black Theology to help shape the emerging congregations identity without exchanging one ethnocentric approach for another.

<sup>7</sup> Rosemary Radford Ruether, *New Woman New Earth: Sexist Ideologies and Human Liberation* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1975), xiii.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 83.

All forms of Liberation Theology have merit and yet they are limited by their own discourse; it is limited by its own language and creates an “us against them” mentality. The biblical witness clearly supports core assertion of liberation theology, namely that God is a liberating God. However, by using Marxism as the philosophical framework the unity of God and God’s kingdom are fragmented and become aggressively confrontational preventing the illumination of God’s reign by its methodology.

### Liturgical Renewal

One form of congregational renewal that has had wide appeal is that of liturgical renewal. Properly understood, liturgical renewal can have incredible ramifications for a local congregation. If liturgy is understood as an ongoing drama of God’s self disclosure to humanity in which we all are invited to participate, it can be a pervasive and lasting vehicle for congregational renewal. By following Paul’s exhortation in Romans 12:1-2, congregations are renewed as they participate in God’s mission and live their lives as a “spiritual act of worship (NIV).” However, liturgical renewal has primarily been a battleground of the clergy and scholars and has not filtered down to the congregational level.

As an academic discipline, liturgical renewal culminated in the 1979 *Book of Common Prayer* that influences all the mainline denominations and reshaped the liturgical forms within congregations. The 1979 *Book of Common Prayer* represents “a profound renewal of interest in and knowledge of the Bible, and widespread ecumenical cross-fertilization.”<sup>9</sup> This, in turn, has led to better understanding of Baptism as initiation into

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<sup>9</sup> John L McCausland, “Some Recent Books on Liturgy,” *Anglican Theological Review* Vol. 80 Issue 3 (Summer 98): 463.

the Church and reemphasis on the priesthood of all believers.<sup>10</sup> While these principles are essential to the worshiping life of a congregation, without a greater theological or doctrinal framework to assimilate the principles of liturgical renewal, they become stagnant and lose their potential power of transformation.

### Charismatic Renewal

One of the most powerful forces for church renewal in the Twentieth Century has been the Pentecostal or Charismatic Movement. There are many popular authors writing on this contemporary issue, but one critically evaluates such works with a healthy skepticism. However, there are a number of academic works by authors such as J. Rodman Williams, David Martin and C. Peter Wagner that are helpful in understanding the theological framework of the Charismatic Movement. In addition, all three of these authors also live and worship within the framework that they are discussing which helps to validate their work beyond strictly academic audiences. I will rely on the works of J. Rodman Williams to summarize the basic contributions and limitations of the Charismatic Renewal Movement.

Chapter Three shows how the early Pentecostal Movement spread through the integration of social action and evangelical zeal; how ministries of compassion emerged out of the transformative experience of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. By tracing the roots of the Pentecostal Movement from out of the Methodist Movement, one can gain an appreciation for the significance and power of spiritual renewal and awakening experiences. John Wesley himself set the theological framework that supports the modern

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<sup>10</sup> Timothy F. Sedgwick, "Vision and Collaboration: Roland Allen, Liturgical Renewal, and Ministry Development," *Anglican Theological Review* Vol. 82 Issue 1(Winter 2000): 155.

Pentecostal Movement by emphasizing personal experiences of conversion and transformation. When placing the Pentecostal Movement within the framework of Methodism, the baptism of the Holy Spirit becomes the means to fulfilling the mission of God in the world. J. Rodman Williams states it this way:

It is apparent that the gift of the Holy Spirit is for the power which enables the ministry of Jesus to be carried forward. It is not power in a general sense—that is, an increment of supernatural strength that could have many uses—but power for ministry that flows from the Father through the Son. As such, what Jesus did—and even more—will be done through His disciples upon the earth.<sup>11</sup>

The dangers and limitations of the Pentecostal or Charismatic Renewal Movement as a model for congregation renewal is that it is limited and can be divisive in many mainline congregations.<sup>12</sup> Additionally, when the focus shifts from completing the mission of God to the individual gifts of the Holy Spirit or the experience of baptism in the Holy Spirit itself, the congregation becomes idolatrous by focusing on the gift itself rather than the giver of the gifts.

### Process Theology

Another popular vehicle to bring about renewal in congregations has been Natural or Process Theology that relies on the philosophical work of Alfred Whitehead. One representative scholar of this school of thought is John B. Cobb, Jr. This section will examine the popularity of Process Theology in light of the ease with which one can justify secularization of the Christian message to reach a particular people group or culture.

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<sup>11</sup> J. Rodman Williams, *The Gift of the Holy Spirit Today: The Greatest Reality of the Twentieth Century* (Plainfield, NJ: Logos International, 1980), 44.

<sup>12</sup> *The Book of Resolutions of the United Methodist Church 2000* (Nashville, TN: United Methodist Publishing House, 2000), 820.

While the desire to reach diverse groups with the message of God's love is admirable, the means in which it is done is too costly to the central message of Christian faith and historical orthodoxy.

John Cobb writes: "There is interaction between God and the world. God makes possible order and value in the world, the world then acts upon God, and God's new relation to the world is affected."<sup>13</sup> In other words, God is changed by the values and cultures of this world. The assumption behind the above quote by John Cobb is that God is in process and is being changed by God's interaction with the world. Many people find this assumption in direct opposition to the biblical witness that affirms God's unchangeable nature. Others are equally concerned with what this assumption means to the nature of truth and ultimately it is a direct attack on orthodox Christology defined by the early ecumenical creeds.

The Nicene Creed affirms that Jesus Christ is the incarnation of God in the world: "God of God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father."<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, the biblical witness affirms not only the unchangeable nature of God but that the fullness of that nature was revealed in Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ. By affirming these truths, the Church has a basis for knowing reality and making value judgments based on that reality. In other words, Jesus being the revelation of the fullness of God guides our worship, our actions, and our moral values; it creates our identity as the Church of Jesus Christ across space and time. Without this anchor of the revealed truth of God, the Church is set adrift and becomes another

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<sup>13</sup> John B. Cobb Jr., *A Christian natural Theology: Based on the Thought of Alfred North Whitehead* (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1974), 148.

<sup>14</sup> *The Book of Common Prayer* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1990), 519.

institution that is guided by social norms through the process of secularization rather than maintaining a cohesive identity as a “resident alien (Philippians 3:20)” community providing an alternative way of living and being. Using Process Theology as the basis for congregational renewal is too costly as it sacrifices God’s unchangeable nature that has been revealed to the Church in Jesus Christ in an attempt to become accepted and/or relevant to society.

### Church Growth Movement

Over the last fifty years, the most widespread renewal movement in the Western church has been the Church Growth Movement. The chief proponent of this movement was Donald McGavran, a former missionary to India and later a professor at Fuller Theological Seminary. His theories continue to shape contemporary thought through people like Rick Warren and *The Purpose Driven Church* and Bill Hybels through the “seeker church” philosophy and the Willow Creek Association. While the Church Growth Movement has great merit, it has some serious limitations that prevent McGavran’s theories from being the guiding philosophy of this project.

While McGavran was in the mission field he started to question the validity of the traditional mission institutions—schools and hospitals—as he recognized that they were “interfering with the central work the mission was called to do: evangelism.”<sup>15</sup> In McGavran’s words:

Secular movements such as the Peace Corps, together with the expanding social services of many governments, are forcing Christians to consider what the essence of Christian mission is. What distinguishes mission from the worthwhile work done by the

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<sup>15</sup> Tim Stafford, “The Father of Church Growth,” *Christianity Today*, February 21, 1986, 20.

Peace Corps and the educational and medical services of practically all governments?<sup>16</sup>

McGavran's critique of the mission philosophy of the mid-Twentieth Century led him to develop a radically modern approach to church growth and missions.

McGavran's theory has four guiding principles that continue to be effective today but also function as the systemic limitations of theory. The four principles are: 1) God wants his lost sheep found; 2) Our choice of method must be based on facts; 3) Pour your resources into winning channels; and, 4) People like to stay with their own people. Let them do so.<sup>17</sup> Each of these principles will be briefly discussed followed by a discussion of the systemic limitations of the Church Growth Movement.

During McGavran's days, few denominations questioned the need or biblical mandate of the Great Commission found in Matthew 28:18-20. However, McGavran's first principle goes further than affirming the Church's effort to fulfill the Great Commission. It proclaims that Christ wants us to succeed. Therefore, McGavran defined good evangelism pragmatically: it led to a measurable number of people responding to the gospel message and becoming responsible members of a local church.

The second principle reflects both McGavran's fierce pragmatism and his use of social science research methodologies. McGavran insisted that evangelistic methods must be based on facts. In short, "If a technique makes the church grow, he is for it. If not, throw it out."<sup>18</sup> However, the measurements of success must be based on statistical information rather than subjective evaluation.

<sup>16</sup> Donald A. McGavran, *Church Growth and Christian Mission* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), 10.

<sup>17</sup> Stafford, "Church Growth," 21.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

The third principle reflects McGavran's field experience as well as his reliance on the guidance of the Holy Spirit who is actively invested in the Church's evangelistic vocation. Churches and mission agencies must lean to evaluate evangelistic and mission work and be committed to providing the needed resources when efforts show that they are baring fruit.

The last principle is sometimes known as the homogeneous principle. It states, people like to stay with others like themselves. Therefore organize churches by ethnic group, culture, tribe, class or nationality. This is not a hindrance to the God's reign. It is expected and should not be interfered with. In short, the theory does not demand that people shed their cultural and communal identities. It realizes that Christians within these communities are the best evangelists to that community and can win the community for Christ.

The Church Growth Movement brings a much needed correction to contemporary Western Church. It emphasizes God's involvement in evangelistic work while demanding objective evaluation of the results and methodologies. However, as Chapter Three will emphasize, God also requires the Church to relieve suffering, work for justice and advocate for peace in the world. By separating evangelism from God's holistic mission, the Church Growth Movement reinforces a fundamental flaw in the Western Church that is preventing church renewal and community transformation.

All the theories discussed above have important contributions to make to the discussion regarding church renewal. However, all of them have fundamental flaws in the theological presuppositions that are not compatible with historical orthodoxy that has defined the Christian faith across space and time, or they have subdivided their theories into such limited spheres that they cease to have the lasting impact on the problems they

claim to be addressing. Chapter Three will make the argument that what the Church needs is doctrinal renewal that will address a holistic approach to God's mission in the world while remaining consistent with the Holy Spirit's witness to the Church as revealed through historical orthodoxy.

### **Diversity & Multiculturalism**

Donald McGavran's theory asserts that people like to be with others who are like themselves. This concept is known as the homogenous principle and it is representative of the American Church. "According to the National Congregational Survey, about nine out of ten American religious congregations are comprised of at least ninety percent of one racial group."<sup>19</sup> While the homogenous nature of the American Church is understandable, it is the assertion of the author that this condition is not ideal and limits the witness of the people of God by modeling exclusivity rather than the inclusivity of the gospel that the Apostle Paul refers to in Galatians 3:26-28:

For in Jesus Christ you are all children of God through faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer subject to a disciplinarian, for in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ, There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male or female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. (NRSV)

Paul's focus is on the shared identity of all in Christ Jesus, not the divisions that divide the Church and create dissension and turmoil.

If the biblical witness calls for unity and acceptance rather than homogenous groups and segregation, why does the American Church struggle so much with creating

<sup>19</sup> Brad Christerson and Michael Emerson, "The Cost of Diversity in Religious Organizations: An In-depth Case Study." *Sociology of Religion* 64:2 (2003): 163.

multicultural congregations? The answer, in part, has to do with the freedom of association and consumeristic mentality that makes up the American experience.

People choose if they wish to be involved in religious organizations, and in which one(s) to be involved . . . Given that people are able to choose their congregations, including choosing to leave them, specialization and niche marketing are used to provide religious goods to people.<sup>20</sup>

How does the American Church offer a counter to these American cultural norms that are in opposition to the biblical witness?

While the resources available regarding church renewal cover a number of generations and a wide variety of schools of thought, the resources available regarding diversity and multiculturalism within local congregations are much more limited in scope. A broad definition of multiculturalism is therefore appropriate and is provided by James and Lillian Breckenridge:

Christian multiculturalism is the personal application of Christian life and thought to all social groups which seek their spiritual identity in the Church.

In its broadest sense, a multicultural approach for the church would be viewed as a process that affects the structural organization of the church, pastoral/instructional strategies, and personal values of members of the congregation.<sup>21</sup>

Furthermore, an elementary understanding of community and culture must be examined if one is going to be able to understand diversity and multiculturalism. While the “melting pot” approach to diversity that is based on assimilating differences into the mainstream has been the traditional approach, its fundamental flaws have been that it denies basic dignity to those whom differ from the mainstream and it denies the ability of

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 165.

<sup>21</sup> Breckenridge, *What Color is Your God?*, 75.

God to work in other cultures. When multiculturalism and diversity are defined as the goals of the church, it is necessary to find a different approach. Douglas Ruffle states:

When we talk of “multiculturalism” we refer to venues where differing cultures interact and interrelate. “Multiculturalism” contrasts the idea of cultural assimilation . . . A culture is a shaped way of life for a people. Birth, language, shared ideas and habits give that culture distinctiveness. Multiculturalism is the mutual respect for the gifts of differing cultures as these cultures interact.<sup>22</sup>

Therefore, while diversity means a culture that has many subcultures, multiculturalism means interaction and acceptance of those subcultures into a shared identity and a sense of community.

The Church is called to be the body of Christ; a community of saints;<sup>23</sup> the followers of The Way: the Church is called to community. What is community?

Community of course, is an elusive term and can mean different things to different people; but in practical terms it refers to a group of people who share their lives and communicate honestly with one another, “whose relationships go deeper than the masks of composure to ‘rejoice together, mourn together, and to delight in each other’.” As N. Scott Peck puts it . . .

Community varies in its form, but the qualities that make for its appeal are much the same. In all of this, what is most important is that people forge a link between their own experience and religious and spiritual teachings. The yearning is about finding a connection between life and meaning, and about finding your own voice and expressing it.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Douglas W. Ruffle, “Building Blocks for a Multicultural Congregation,” *Quarterly Review* Volume 13, Fall 1993, page 74.

<sup>23</sup> “The Apostles’ Creed,” *Book of Common Prayer*, 96.

<sup>24</sup> Donald P. Smith, *Empowering Ministries* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1996), 21. Smith is citing Wade Clark Roof, *A Generation of Seekers: The Spiritual Journey of the Baby Boomer Generation* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1993), 252. See also M Scott Peck, *The Different Drum: Community-Making and Peace* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1987), 59.

The ministry model that will be described in Chapter Four, therefore, will be focused on creating a new multicultural community rather than assimilation or simply creating diversity within a local congregation.

### **Collaboration**

The biblical model of diversity in community and giftedness should be the norm for the Church. However, the lack of collaboration at the local level is nowhere made clearer than when one reviews the literature surrounding the discipline of collaboration.

Collaboration is relevant to church renewal in a number of ways: 1) collaboration shares available resources; 2) collaboration is a prerequisite to illegibility for many grants; and, 3) collaboration furthers the witness to the unity of the Church of Jesus Christ. Little has been written on congregational collaboration. Therefore this chapter relies on an interdisciplinary approach using resources from the business and education communities.

In the business and higher education fields, competition is the norm. Competition is the force that drives creativity and innovation. However, “collaboration with competitors is in fashion . . . The case for collaboration is stronger then ever. It takes so much money to develop new products and to penetrate new markets.”<sup>25</sup> Yet, the American Church has opted for isolation and “specialization and niche marketing . . . to provide religious goods to people.”<sup>26</sup> The American church needs to learn from the business world and upper education while recapturing the biblical concept of the unity of

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<sup>25</sup> Gary Hamel, Yves L. Doz, and C. K. Prahalad, “Collaborate with Your Competitors—and Win.” *International Management: A Reader*. Pervez N. Ghauri and Prasad, S. Benjamin, Editors. London: The Dryden Press, 1995, page 146.

<sup>26</sup> Christerson, “The Cost of Diversity in Religious Organizations,” 163.

the body of Christ if there is to be hope for resource-starved, urban churches like Plainfield United Methodist Church.

Rosabeth Kanter writes in her essay “Collaborative Advantage: The Art of Alliances:”

When companies join forces—whether on research or as full-scale partners—often the tendency is to emphasize the legal and financial aspects of the deal. But smart managers know that alliances involve much more. Like human relationships, business partnerships are living systems that have endless possibilities. And companies that know how to tap those possibilities, and manage alliances effectively, have a key corporate asset.”<sup>27</sup>

The ability to “tap the possibilities” is what this section focuses by relying on the four principles of collaboration laid out by Gary Hamel, Yves L. Doz and C. K. Prahalad in their essay, “Collaborate with Your Competitors—and Win.” The four principles are: 1) Collaboration is competition in a different form; 2) Harmony is not the most important measure of success; 3) Cooperation has limits; and, 4) Learning from partners is paramount.<sup>28</sup>

The reality is that many traditions, denominations, congregations and para-church organizations have an ideology that asserts that they are *the* holders of truth. Though this attitude is undesirable, it need not eliminate the possibility of collaborating with them. It is important to remember the first principle of collaboration in these instances: Never forget that collaboration can and often is another form of competition; always “enter alliances

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<sup>27</sup> Rosebeth Moss Kanter, “Collaborative Advantage: The Art of Alliances,” *Harvard Business Review on Strategic Alliances*. (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2002), 97.

<sup>28</sup> Hamel, “Collaborate with Your Competitors,” 147.

with a clear strategic objective;”<sup>29</sup> and always understand a partner’s objectives and how they effect yours.

Because each partner in the collaboration or alliance has different objectives, it is important for churches to realize that there *will* be conflict. The second principle of collaboration is a healthy dose of realism that reminds the participants that harmony is not the leading indicator of success. “Indeed, occasional conflict may be the best evidence of mutually beneficial collaboration.”<sup>30</sup> If collaboration is to become a reality in congregation, the fear of conflict will need to be overcome. A congregation will need to learn how to deal with internal and external conflict without surrendering their core values and mission.

Protecting a congregation’s identity, core values and mission is the paramount concern. Therefore, it is imperative that a congregation articulate to all concerned the limits of the alliance. “Cooperation has limits. Companies [or congregations] must defend against competitive compromise.”<sup>31</sup> Do not give up the identity, values, or mission of the congregation for the sake of collaboration. Each partner has a unique call and experience in the body of Christ. Know your limits and what is non-negotiable before entering into an alliance.

The last principle reminds us to remain life-long learners. Never enter an alliance with the paternalistic attitude of superiority. “Successful companies [or congregations] view each alliance as a window on their partners’ broad capabilities. They use the alliance to build skills in areas outside the formal agreement and systematically diffuse new

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., brackets mine.

knowledge through their organizations.”<sup>32</sup> A successful alliance allows both parties to build capacity within their own organization. With this in mind, it is not advisable to enter into a collaborative relationship unless each congregation can build knowledge and skills that make them more effective.

The easiest way for a congregation to build capacity is to develop a clear sense of identity through an understanding of their core values and mission. Only then is a congregation able to reap the benefits of collaborative relationships. However, congregations need to remain vigilant as they follow the four principles of collaboration not to subvert their own identity.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter has illustrated that there are numerous theories regarding church renewal from a wide variety of perspectives. The limits of the theories listed in this chapter have required a fresh approach that can be holistic in its approach without sacrificing historical orthodoxy. Additionally, it has been shown that ethnic diversity within a congregation is not sufficient to creating a community that will shape the congregation’s identity. A multi-ethnic community requires a multicultural approach that allows different cultural norms to be expressed within an affirming community without people feeling rejected or subjected.

Lastly, the truly unique approach of this project is the utilization of collaboration as a means to achieve the church’s mission within a multicultural community without sacrificing identity, core values or the mission of the congregation.

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid. brackets mine.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **THEORETICAL FOUNDATION**

Over the last fifty years, the Church has heard many calls for renewal. In the previous chapter, many of these theories were discussed and eliminated as the guiding theory for this project that focuses on bringing renewal and integration to the urban congregation known as Plainfield United Methodist Church. Although the previous theories of renewal were eliminated as guiding theory of this project, all of them have merit. William J. Abraham, in his book, *Waking from Doctrinal Amnesia: The Healing of Doctrine in the United Methodist Church*, states that renewal is much more inclusive than any of the above emphases. While defining renewal, W.J. Abraham states, “The ultimate issue in the end is doctrinal. Christians are at odds on how to articulate their primary doctrines in the modern world.”<sup>1</sup> In other words, renewal is a rediscovery of the purpose of the Church. Therefore, renewal is both an ecclesiological and missional issue rooted in God’s purpose and the Church’s identity. We now turn to the biblical foundations as we discuss the primary question of this chapter: “What is the mission of the Church of Jesus Christ?”

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<sup>1</sup> William J. Abraham, *Waking from Doctrinal Amnesia: The Healing of Doctrine in the United Methodist Church* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1995), 89.

## Biblical Foundations For Ministry Focus

In order to get a complete picture of the mission of the church and stay with the original hypothesis, that congregational renewal comes from fulfilling the mission of Jesus Christ in the world; including both social justice and evangelism. It is necessary to further understand the mission of Jesus Christ and the Church. It is the position of the author that mission is part of God's nature not just a function of the church. To support the author's position this section will utilize both the Old and New Testaments. The discussion will start by focusing on what the mission is not. The discussion will start with the Old Covenant that God made with Abraham in Genesis 12 and proceed to Amos, the earliest prophetic book, as an example that illustrates why God called Israel and Judea to repent.

Genesis 12:1-9 describes the moment that God called Abram and Abram's response. In Genesis 12:1, God instructed Abram to leave his country, all his people and his father's house and proceed to an undisclosed land that God promises to give him. God promises,

I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all people on earth will be blessed through you.<sup>2</sup>

The key element of Genesis 12:1-3 for this discussion is that God calls Abram to be the source of blessing for all people on earth. Abram will have God's blessing and protection as long as he trusts God and allows God to bless others through him.

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<sup>2</sup> Genesis 12:2-3, NIV

Throughout the history of Israel and Judea, there was an ongoing struggle to balance exclusive and inclusive views of God's salvation.<sup>3</sup> While God called Abram out from amongst the nations, he also was called to be a blessing to them. This tension has yet to be resolved in Judaism or in Christianity. When this tension is off balance toward exclusivity, the prophets come forth to call the people to repentance. When this tension is off balance toward inclusivity, the people of God lose their distinct identity and face God's judgment for idolatry. Any definition of the church's mission must maintain this faithful tension or risk being an irrelevant, exclusive social club on one hand or an idolatrous people that can no longer legitimately be called the people of God on the other. Amos represents the prophetic voice that challenges a people that have become exclusive, oppressive and self-centered. Amos 6:1-8 is a prime example of Amos challenge to the *status quo* by trying to restore balance to the tension between inclusivity and exclusivity.

The book of Amos is the earliest prophetic book within the Judeo-Christian tradition. As such, the book of Amos marks the beginning of the written prophetic tradition while, at the same time, announcing the impending destruction of the Northern kingdom and exile of that society's elite.<sup>4</sup> It is a pivotal book in the study of prophetic literature and the history of Israel. At the same time, it challenges "the children of God" of every generation who live in comfort while the majority of people suffer under the heavy yoke of the few, which inevitably leads to oppression, hunger, violence, and exclusion. The discussion of Amos will be divided into three sections: (1) a brief historical

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<sup>3</sup> Donald Senior and Carroll Stuhlmueller, *The Biblical Foundations for Mission* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1983), 83.

<sup>4</sup> Donald E. Gowan, "The Book of Amos: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections," in *The New Interpreter's Bible: A Commentary in Twelve Volumes*. Vol. VII (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1996), 339-340.

overview, (2) an examination of liturgical language within the text; and, (3) a discussion of missiological implications of the text.

Before it is possible to understand the power of Amos' message and the pivotal nature of God's impending action in response to the Northern Kingdom's treatment of the poor and the marginalized, it is necessary to understand a few key historical characteristics about Amos and the times he lived. First, who was Amos? Second, where did he come from? Third, who was Amos addressing? Fourth, what situations compelled him to speak? Fifth, what are the historical and cultural issues that need to be explored to understand Amos' message?

Part of Amos' uniqueness is that he is an outsider, a foreigner, calling a foreign people and nation to repentance and pronouncing impending doom. It must be understood from the outset that Amos, as a marginalized person, was not popular, e.g., Amaziah's reaction in chapter 7. The text is virtually silent about Amos' history, but there are a few references within the text. Amos 1:1 states that he was a shepherd of Tekoa in Judea, and he was active during the reigns of King Uzziah of Judea (783-742 BCE) and King Jeroboam in Israel (785-745 BCE). Amos also refers to himself, saying, "I am herdsman, and a dresser of sycamore trees (7:14 NRSV)," and claims to have been called by God to prophesy to Israel. As such, Amos was an outsider from Judea addressing an unpopular message to the people and leaders of Israel.

Central to understanding Amos' motivation and message is to understand his concern for the marginalized and oppressed. This will later become a central issue in interpreting Amos 6:1-8. Amos calls Israel to repentance and pronounces God's judgment because of this oppression. For example:

<b>Verse</b>	<b>Oppression/Iniquity</b>	<b>Verse</b>	<b>Punishment</b>
3:10	"They do not know how to do right, says the LORD, those who store up violence and robbery in their strongholds (NRSV)"	3:11	"Therefore thus says the Lord God: An adversary shall surround the land, and strip you of your defenses; and your strongholds shall be plundered (NRSV)"
4:1	"Here the word, you cows of Bashan who are on Mount Samaria, who oppress the poor, who crush the needy (NRSV)."'	4:2	"The Lord God has sworn by his holiness: The time is surely coming upon you, when they shall take you away with hooks, even the last of you with fishhooks (NRSV)"
5:11	"Because you trample on the poor and take from the levies of grain (NRSV)."'	5:11	"You have built houses of hewn stone, but you shall not live in them; you have planted pleasant vineyards, but you shall not drink of their wine (NRSV)"

This oppression should be understood within the domestic socio-political context of relative peace and the expansion of Israel's borders; a military campaign with heavy levies and taxes to further a few people's thirst for power and money.<sup>5</sup>

Before proceeding to a discussion of the missiological implications, it must be mentioned that to understand Amos 6:1-8, one must be familiar with the ritualistic worship

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 342. Gowan makes the comment that the Northern and Southern Kingdoms are engaged in offensive military campaigns to expand their borders. The conclusion that the oppression is in part passed on a few peoples desire for money and power is my own and is supported within the book of Amos and within the text in question.

practices of Israel and Judea. Due to the limited scope of this chapter, a few key elements will be listed but not explained further.

- The symbolic and ritualistic use of wine, e.g. Passover cups,
- The practice of sacrificing animals and the occasional eating of meat being events that were tied together in the sacrificial system,
- The ritualistic and ceremonial use of ivory in religious furniture throughout the Ancient Near East.<sup>6</sup>,
- The practice of anointing with oil,
- The importance of music in the liturgical life of Israel and Judea.

When the liturgical language is illuminated in this Scripture, the passage's meaning becomes much clearer. Amos is addressing the descendants of Abraham and Sarah, northern and southern kingdoms, especially the distinguished ones with power and influence. They have reigned with violence (6:2) and oppressed the poor (5:11) and they have taken what belongs to God alone and used it for their own (6:4-6), and they are unrepentant and unmoved by the destruction they have caused the people of Joseph. As a result, the LORD has sworn (6:8) to send them into exile and deliver their wealth (3:11& 6:8) into the hands of their enemies, forever changing the status and covenantal relationship of the northern kingdom.

The missiological implications of this text are numerous: (1) God calls and uses people from the margins of society to call the people of God to repentance and mission; (2) God abhors violence and oppression of the poor and weaker by stronger people and/or

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<sup>6</sup> "Ivory," *Anchor Bible Dictionary* Vol. 3 (New York: Doubleday, 1992).

nations; (3) Personal or nationalistic accumulation of wealth, power, comfort, and resources are acts of idolatry. Each of these implications will briefly be discussed.

God calls and uses people from the margins of society to call the people of God to repentance and mission. The outsider sees clearly the abuses and problems within societies, organizations or groups. The very act of being uprooted or being culturally set adrift seems to make one more accessible to God's Spirit and direction, e.g. Abraham, Moses, and Jesus. Within the context of this project, this missional implication asserts that God will use the gifts and passions of the African-Americans in Grand Rapids to bring renewal to Plainfield United Methodist Church.

God abhors violence and oppression of the poor and stronger people or nations. Even in Amos, the earliest of the prophetic books, we see the dynamic struggle between the exclusive and inclusive interpretations of God's mission. Or stated another way, between the ethnocentric and universal understanding of salvation. However, the implied answer to the question in 6:2, "Are you better than these kingdoms (faiths, denominations, or people)?" is absolutely not! Amos 6:1-8 must therefore be understood as a condemnation of personal, nationalistic, and religious oppression. Within the context of this discussion, Amos is condemning Christian pride and privilege as well as the common ethnocentric practices of the American Church.

Personal, congregational, or nationalistic accumulation of wealth, power and resources (that truly belong to God) are acts of idolatry. It is no coincidence that Amos links violence and idolatry together. The accumulation of wealth, power and resources is not trusting in the LORD's provision and will. This type of trust belongs only to the LORD.

Amos 6:1-8 is pertinent to contemporary American society, and as such; it provides guidance to today's prophets, pastors. Amos screams from across the chasm of time, "repent from worshiping money, comfort and privilege; Repent from justifying your oppression of others as your 'birthright'; Repent from using violence to enforce your will. Turn back to God or these things you have made gods will be destroyed." God's mission is not based on giving the few or the "elect" privilege and power. God's mission is about representing God and being a blessing to the nations.

It has been shown that the Judeo-Christian tradition started in Genesis 12:1-9 with God calling Abram away from other people to be the means God uses to bless all the people of the world. The tension between being called out of, while at the same time, being called into ministry to the world was a struggle that continues in Judaism and the Church to this day. Amos was an early illustration of this tension, but the focus of this chapter now moves to the New Testament, specifically the Gospel of Matthew.

The Great Commission, Matthew 28:16-20, is one of the most quoted missional texts in the Bible. However, it is often misquoted out of context as a means of justifying a purely spiritual-minded gospel. To recapture this important text, this paper will show that Matthew's understanding of discipleship is holistic in nature and encompasses the true mission of the Church of Jesus Christ. The discussion will deal with two subjects that will put the Great Commission in a proper context: (1) The way Matthew understands mission; and, (2) implications of the understanding of mission regarding the Great Commission.

The Gospel of Matthew is essentially a missionary text. Matthew wrote it because of his missionary vision and not because he wanted to present a "life of Jesus." He wanted to provide guidance to a community in crisis regarding how it should understand its calling

and mission.<sup>7</sup> David Bosch in, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, suggests that his Jewish Christian Community had settled among Gentiles, probably in Syria and faced a crisis of self-understanding. The community felt it had to defend its right to view themselves as the “true Israel” but what should its identity be in the coming years? Can it continue as a movement of Judaism? What attitudes should it adopt toward the Law? Can it give up on viewing Jesus as more than just a prophet? In addition, can the community give up on the old mission to follow Jesus?<sup>8</sup> Matthew does not only help the people cope with the new pressures they confront, but assists them in developing a missionary ethos that will match the challenges of a new era.

Not everyone in Matthew’s community, however, agreed on the direction that they should take at this present juncture. Some emphasized faithfulness to the Law, others to the Spirit. Matthew shows, on the basis of Jesus’ tradition, that both are right . . . but both are also wrong at the same time. In this way, Matthew is acting as a mediator, preparing the way for reconciliation, forgiveness and mutual love within the community. Matthew challenges the community to stop regarding itself as a sectarian group within Judaism, but to take up their destiny as the church of Christ (*ekklesia*) and become the “true Israel.” It is through these lenses that the Great Commission must be interpreted.

Bosch, writes, “The gospel of Matthew reflects an important and distinct sub-paradigm of the early church’s interpretation and experience of mission.”<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, Bosch argues that without understanding the greater context of Matthew, the Great

<sup>7</sup> David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 1991), 57.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 58.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 56.

Commission is reduced to a religious cliché. Today, most scholars agree that these reductionistic and simplistic interpretations are inadequate and that in Matthew's view, Jesus actually expected all his followers to live according to the norms he set forth in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) and the Great Commandment (Matthew 23:34-40). The failure of Christians to live according to these standards does not absolve them from the challenge to do so. In addition, it is Christ's supreme "work" of selfless love on the cross that gives this challenge its binding force.<sup>10</sup>

Matthew clearly models what he means by being a disciple of Jesus and thus gives the community missional authority and direction.<sup>11</sup> However, even though there is no essential difference between Jesus and the disciples, Matthew used the verb, *proskynein*, "to worship" or literally "to fall prostrate" to refer to what the disciples do before Jesus. Clearly, for Matthew, Jesus is more than someone to emulate. Not only do disciples have Jesus' missional authority but also they are directed to worship Jesus and to continue His mission in the world.

The Great Commission calls the Church to make disciples. What does making disciples mean in light of Matthew's context? A disciple is a specifically ecclesiological concept meaning the evangelist.<sup>12</sup> The verb that commonly goes with "disciple" is *akoloutheim*, "to follow after." The followers of Jesus have to make others into what they themselves are: disciples. For Matthew there is no break or discontinuity between the history of Jesus and the era of the Church. Moreover, the disciples are *adelphoi*, among one another. Every disciple follows the Master, but never alone, every disciple is a

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 70.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 75.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 76.

member of the fellowship of disciples or is not a disciple.<sup>13</sup> Disciples, therefore, are inseparable from Jesus and each other.

In conclusion, the reductionistic tendency to interpret the Great Commission as only a call for evangelism is simplistic and must be avoided. Matthew's gospel instructs all disciples to work for justice, live righteously, love God and neighbor, and to spread the Good News of salvation through Jesus Christ. To emphasize only part of Matthew's definition is to distort the meaning of the gospel and to lose the missionary authority and direction revealed through the Lord Jesus Christ.

The biblical foundation for this project relies on the witness of scripture throughout the ages as the people of God have struggled with what it means to be faithful to God's call. God called Abram to leave his country, his home and his father's house to become a blessing to all peoples on the earth. Amos pronounced God's impending judgment on the people of Israel because they had lost track of God's mission by becoming self-seeking and exclusive. Additionally, Matthew, reinterpreting the old mission insight of Jesus Christ, challenges the followers of Jesus Christ to work toward justice and peace, to live righteously, and to share the Good News of salvation to all people. Biblically, the question "what is the mission of the Church of Jesus Christ?" has been answered: to become a blessing to all the people of the world, by emulating Christ's self-giving love by working as a community of disciples for the causes of peace, justice, love, and salvation. Stated another way, the mission of the Church is to continue the mission of Jesus Christ in our world.

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 74.

## Theological Foundation For Ministry Focus

The purpose of this section is to think theologically about the meaning of the mission of the Church of Jesus Christ. To fulfill this goal, this paper will focus on two theological concepts: (1) *Missio Dei*, literally the Mission of God; and, (2) the kingdom of God. Examining these two concepts will give the reader a clear understanding that the mission of the Church proceeds from God's own missional nature, and avoid reductionistic interpretations of the Church's mission by tying it directly to the kingdom (or reign) of God.

During the Brandenburg Missionary Conference in 1932, Karl Barth was one of the first theologians to articulate that mission is an activity of God.<sup>14</sup> This new theological paradigm broke radically with an Enlightenment approach to theology. The result was an expanding of the classic doctrine of God the Father and God the Son sending the Spirit to include another “movement”; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit sending the Church into the world. When one participates in the mission of the Church, one is participating with the divine nature of God.

Therefore, mission is not an activity of the church but an attribute of God.<sup>15</sup> Jurgen Moltmann states, “It is not the church that has a mission of salvation to fulfill in the world; it is the mission of the Son and the Spirit through the Father and it includes the church.”<sup>16</sup> Therefore, to participate in mission is to participate in the movement of God’s

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 389.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 390.

<sup>16</sup> Jurgen Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit: A Contribution to Messianic Ecclesiology* (London: SCM Press, 1977), 64.

love toward people, since God is the source and force of that sending love. Mission proceeds out of the nature of the Triune God toward humanity. In other words, mission is movement from God to the world; without mission there would not be the Church.

*Missio Dei* proves that mission emanates from the divine nature and is the source and force of the sending love that creates and motivates the Church. The focus now turns to defining characteristics of that divine nature: what does God want us to do? To answer this question, we will rely on the theological concept of the kingdom of God as viewed through the lenses of the classic disciplines of Christology and Ecclesiology in the order.

Jesus proclaiming the kingdom of God was nothing new. John the Baptist proclaimed the kingdom of God was at hand.

What is new is that in Jesus the kingdom is present. That is why the first generations of Christian preachers used a different language from the generations of Christians: he spoke about the kingdom, they spoke about Jesus.<sup>17</sup>

The kingdom of God forever has an identity, Jesus from Nazareth, the Christ. Therefore, the incarnation is a pivotal event in the history of humanity; it is the moment that the kingdom of God became a present reality. The Church is not the kingdom of God, as Augustine argues in *City of God*, but proclaims the kingdom of God as it proclaims Jesus Christ. The kingdom of God is incarnational in nature.

If the kingdom of God is incarnational in nature and became a reality in the person of Jesus Christ, what is the Church's role regarding the kingdom of God? It has already been stated that the church is to proclaim the kingdom as it proclaims Christ. Moreover, like Abram, the Church is called out of the world to be used by God to be a blessing to the world. In addition, it has been shown that Church's mission is inseparably tied to the

divine nature as revealed in Jesus Christ. Therefore, the nature of the church is to be disciples of Jesus Christ as defined in the previous section.

### **Historical Foundations To Ministry Focus**

Orthodox Christian theology looks to the return of Jesus Christ for the moment that God's intention for the world will ultimately be fulfilled. In the meantime, God has not been inactive. The discussion will not turn to a historical analysis of the question, "What is the mission of the Church of Jesus Christ?" This question will be answered by examining three historical eras and extrapolating common themes. The three historical events: (1) the unity of social action and evangelistic work in the early Methodist Movement; (2) the mission emphasis within Evangelical circles throughout the Twentieth Century; and, (3) the Pentecostal revival in the turn of the Twentieth Century.

The early Methodist Movement in England focused on holistic ministry of its membership and the greater society by integrating social action and evangelistic fervor. John and Charles Wesley were the founders of the Methodist Movement, which in the United States became the Methodist Episcopal Church after the Revolutionary War. Of the two brothers, John was the overpowering personality that organized and administrated the early Methodist Movement until his death in 1791. It was John Wesley who reinterpreted the definition of poverty and insisted that the people called Methodists respond out of duty and love. Richard Heitzenrater states it very clearly in his essay "The Poor and the People Called Methodists": "Wesley [John] declassified the concept of poverty, identified the breadth of the problem, and universalized the responsibility for

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<sup>17</sup> Leslie Newbigin, *The Open Secret: An Introduction to the Theology of Mission* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing House, 1978), 40.

dealing with it.”<sup>18</sup> Three questions arise from the preceding quote that must be answered in order to understand the unity between social action and evangelism in the early Methodist Movement. First, how did John Wesley declassify the concept of poverty? Second, how did John Wesley universalize the responsibility for dealing with poverty? Lastly, what were the primary outcomes of Wesley’s new approach?

In order to understand how John Wesley declassified the concept of poverty, it is necessary to understand the society in which the early Methodist Movement took root. The primary way that poverty was addressed in eighteenth century England was through a series of Poor Laws that codified poverty and made the responsibility of maintaining the minimal necessities the responsibility of the government.<sup>19</sup> For John Wesley, however, “the concept of ‘necessities’ was not based on an absolute level of sustenance that would prevent destitution.”<sup>20</sup> He defined necessities “in terms of *sufficient* food, *decent* apparel, and *proper* housing.”<sup>21</sup> Wesley’s subjective construal of the concept of poverty took into account the dignity of the individual and the context in which they lived; by de-codifying poverty Wesley was able to support people without creating an “us and them” mentality.

#### How did John Wesley universalize the responsibility for dealing with poverty?

John Wesley expected a great deal from his followers in terms of commitment, not just spiritual but also material. He had a strict definition of wealth, namely, the possession of money beyond what was needed for food and clothes with a little left over. He also declared that retention of such surplus sums for personal use amounted to theft from God. Wesley, therefore, saw nothing wrong

<sup>18</sup> Richard P. Heitzenrater, “The Poor and the People Called Methodists,” in *The Poor and the People Called Methodists: 1729-1999*. Richard P. Heitzenrater, editor (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 2002), 28. Brackets mine.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

in expecting his followers to give unsparingly, even when most people would have regarded them as poor themselves.<sup>22</sup>

The early Methodist Movement emphasized spiritual holiness. However, spiritual holiness was not defined in terms of spiritual attitudes but in living lives that pleased God and produced the Fruits of the Spirit. The expectation of showing compassion and helping those in need was an interracial part of both personal and communal piety for the early Methodist Movement. It was not the sole responsibility of the state or the state supported church, but for all those who followed Jesus.<sup>23</sup>

What were the primary outcomes of Wesley's new approach? The early Methodist Movement had a great impact on the communities in which Societies were active. This impact was achieved through communal and individual acts of social action combined with evangelistic activities that led to the growth of Societies in Great Britain and around the world. City Road Chapel in London is one good example of how early British Methodism was interested in communal and individual acts of social action and evangelistic activities.

City Road Chapel was the *de facto* national headquarters of the Methodist Movement in the middle to late eighteenth century. City Road Chapel "was the largest and most important building in British Methodism, with seating capacity of nearly 1,500 people and sufficient space to permit a wide range of services including a medical dispensary school, alms house, and accommodations."<sup>24</sup> The allocation of resources and

<sup>22</sup> Gareth Lloyd, "Eighteenth-Century Methodist and the London Poor," in *The Poor and the People Called Methodists: 1729-1999*. Richard P. Heitsenrater, editor (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 2002), 126.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 124-129.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 122.

space emphasizes the importance ministries of both social outreach and evangelistic preaching that permeated early British and American Methodism.

Early Methodism was not limited to communal acts of social action and evangelism. Individuals were encouraged and challenged to use their passions and gifts in service to the poor and to God's kingdom. It is well known that the overwhelming majority of Methodist preachers were lay people who answered the call, but this same trend was also true in social ministries. These ministries addressed a wide variety of concerns. "The most important of these was the Strangers' Friend Society . . . to 'look after the destitute sick poor, without distinction of sect or country, at their own habitations'."<sup>25</sup>

As early British Methodism continued holistic ministry to the communities in which the Societies had a presence, there was phenomenal growth. "In England membership in Methodist societies of all stripes expanded from 55,705 in 1790 to 285,530 in 1830."<sup>26</sup> Additionally, "the most dramatic growth of all occurred in America, which had fewer than a thousand members in 1770 and more than 250,000 only fifty years later."<sup>27</sup>

David Bosch tracks the mission emphasis as it develops within Evangelical circles concerning the relationship between evangelism and the social dimensions of Christian mission. By tracking missional development within a particular group, it is possible to observe the many subtleties of mission theology as opposing groups battle to shape the

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 124.

<sup>26</sup> David Hempton, *Methodism: Empire of the Spirit* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005), 109.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

mission of their group. Bosch writes, “The relationship between evangelistic and societal dimensions of the Christian’s mission constitutes one of the thorniest areas in the theology and practice of mission.”<sup>28</sup> There were five issues that these evangelical conferences were trying to address. First, the realization that social justice is at the heart of the Old Testament. Second, the early Church developed within a fundamentally different context than the modern Church. Early Christians were participants in a *religio illicita*, illegal religion that was at best tolerated but also persecuted. Early Christians, therefore, could not advise or shape the culture based on a shared faith. “This circumstance has led many Christians of later generations to the erroneous view that the New Testament is more ‘spiritual’ than the Old and is, because of this, superior to it.”<sup>29</sup> Third, after the establishment of Christendom, a separation of legal and spiritual authorities emerged as “court prophets” found it impossible or imprudent to challenge injustice. Fourth, the fall of the Roman Empire led Augustine to visualize the division of reality into two irreconcilable opposites. Many Catholics and Protestants still hold the view that the world is evil and unredeemable, and changing its structures did not really fall within the sphere of the Church’s responsibility. Fifth, the Enlightenment brought a philosophical separation of the “public” from the “private” and “facts” from “values” while relegating religion to the latter of both sets.<sup>30</sup>

As the evangelicals wrestled with this important issue, the World Council of Churches emphasized social action as a means to bring a balance to the Church’s understanding of mission. Whereas the WCC and contemporary Catholicism made the

<sup>28</sup> Bosch, *Transforming*, 401

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 400-408.

prophetic motif the central point, evangelicals responded by emphasizing evangelism and relegating social action to a tool for evangelism. This point can be illustrated by the following quote from Billy Graham in 1967:

I am convinced if the Church went back to its main task of proclaiming the Gospel and getting people converted to Christ, it would have far greater impact on the social, moral and psychological needs of men than any other thing it could possibly do. Some of the greatest social movements of history have come about as the result of men being converted to Christ.<sup>31</sup>

Evangelicals started in the 1970s to regain a holistic understanding of mission due to the inclusion of Third World theologians. One of the leading Evangelical theologians, John Stott, reversed his position after the 1974 Lausanne Conference. Scott writes,

I now see more clearly that not only the consequences of the commission but the actual commission itself must be understood to include social as well as evangelical responsibilities, unless we are to be guilty of distorting the words of Jesus.<sup>32</sup>

The argument over the interplay between the evangelistic and societal dimensions of Christian mission did not stop at Lausanne. In 1982, forty scholars met and determined that there was a cause and effect relationship between evangelism and social action.<sup>33</sup> This position was later rejected in 1983 at the Wheaton Conference where both evangelism and social action were recognized as equal dimensions of the Gospel, “Evil is not in the human heart but also in social structure . . . The mission of the church includes both the proclamation of the Gospel and its demonstration.”<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 404.

<sup>32</sup> John R.W. Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World* (London: Falcon, 1975), 23.

<sup>33</sup> Bosch, *Transforming*. 405.

<sup>34</sup> Wheaton 1983 Statement, paragraph 26.

Whereas the Evangelical Movement came to a late understanding that the Church's mission was equally concerned with evangelism and social action, the Pentecostal movement broke forth with a global mindset that worked toward worldwide evangelism and social action. However, toward the latter part of the Twentieth Century, fractures had occurred regarding the legitimacy of social action as part of the mission of the Church.

When the Pentecostal movement burst on the scene at the turn of the twentieth century, the participants were marked by a sense of global consciousness. Frank Bartleman's eyewitness interpretation of the Azusa Street Revival reflects the typical connection between Spirit baptism and the empowerment of the Pentecostal church for global evangelization.

Pentecost has come to Los Angeles, the American Jerusalem. Every sect, creed and doctrine under Heaven is found in Los Angeles . . . All nations are represented as at Jerusalem. Thousands are here from all over the Union and from many parts of the world, sent of God for "Pentecost". These will scatter the fire to the ends of the earth. Missionary zeal is at white heat. The "gifts" of the Spirit are being given, the church's panoply restored. Surely we are in the days of restoration, the "last days" wonderful and glorious days . . . The revival will be a worldwide one, without doubt.<sup>35</sup>

Despite the American centricity of this characterization, L. Grant McClung, Jr., Church of God missiologist, identifies the missiological significance of this interpretation of the Twentieth Century outpouring of the Spirit when he notes "Early Pentecostals were characterized by an 'urgent missiology' that caused them to seek immediate world evangelization in light of their conviction of the imminent return of Christ."<sup>36</sup> Global

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<sup>35</sup> Vinay Samuel, and Chris Sugden, *Mission as Transformation* (New Delhi, India: Regnum Books International, 1999), 46.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 45.

mobility has brought church leaders exposure to the world's political ills, oppressive economic situations, social problems and structural injustices. Responding to human need within a global context has generated a staggering proliferation of social programs in all sectors of the Pentecostal movement, including the Assemblies of God. The fact of Pentecostals establishing hospices, orphanages, rescue missions, etc. is not surprising. What is surprising is the fact that the expansion of social programs includes those that are designed to change the unjust social conditions that perpetuate human ills such as poverty and hunger. These programs of social service and social change testify to an awakened social conscience. Despite all this good, Church leaders are not united in justifying social concern as part of the church's mission which often leads to a fragmented approach in the church's missional programs, with some doing evangelization and others championing social concerns.

### **Conclusion**

Throughout history, those movements that incorporate both evangelism and social action into their understanding of mission have prospered. Whereas, those churches that emphasize one or the other risk becoming obsolete or irrelevant. As W.J. Abraham argues, renewal will only happen when the Church understands how to articulate the primary doctrines of the church to a modern world. Those primary doctrines are laid out above in the biblical theological foundations sections. The Church must reconnect with God's purpose in the world as revealed in Scripture and through the incarnation. The Church must participate in God's mission to bring forth justice, peace, love and salvation. The Church must reject an inclusive approach to mission that focuses on privilege rather

than responsibility. Then each congregation will be poised to discern God's specific mission field and develop collaborative ministries that further said mission.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **METHODOLOGY**

The preceding chapters have defined the ministry context, examined the literature surrounding congregational renewal, multiculturalism, integration and collaboration, and then set the theological, historical and biblical foundations supporting a holistic interpretation of the mission of Jesus Christ. The preceding chapters have created a base that supports the next phase of the project—project development and methodology that will guide and evaluate the overall project. However, before that can be accomplished, it is necessary to restate the project goal and hypothesis. The goal of the project is to bring congregational renewal and ethnic integration to Plainfield Untied Methodist Church. The hypothesis guiding the project is that congregational renewal comes from fulfilling the mission of Jesus Christ in the world; including both social action and evangelism. If this hypothesis proves true, the secondary hypothesis is that the congregation should then become more representative of the surrounding community as they engage their neighbors with the holistic mission of Jesus Christ.

Every project has a starting point. This chapter will discuss the two theoretical presuppositions that guided the model's development. These presuppositions are like lenses that this project is examined through to support the rational progression. Both of these theories emerge out of the author's life journey as explained in Chapter One and have roots in the Methodist Movement. The first section of this chapter will explain these

two presuppositions. The second section will define the starting point of Plainfield United Methodist Church in light of the two presuppositions. The remainder of this chapter will be divided into two distinct sections with a concluding statement. The first of these distinct sections deals with a description of the Generation-to-Generation Tutoring Program and defining the goals and methods of measurement. It is important to note that the tutoring program is designed to only be a catalyst for congregational renewal and integration. The second section describes the Doctor of Ministry Project goals and research methodology. However, the presuppositions that begin this chapter are the principles that guide both the tutoring program and the overall project.

### **Presuppositions**

As stated above, there are two theoretical presuppositions that guide the development of the Generation-to-Generation Tutoring Program and the overall project. These “lenses” define the issues and guide the project through the development and implementation stages. The first presupposition is a community formation theory that is based on the early Methodist Class Meetings. The second is a theory informed by the self-revelation of God through the incarnation of Jesus Christ. This incarnational model of transformation serves as both evaluation tool and guide to the transformative process as a congregation engages the community.

One of the long-lasting effects of the early Methodist Movement is the focus on small groups. The small group emphasis in the modern church has its historical roots in the Class Meetings of early Methodism. The power of the Class Meeting and today’s small groups is that they create community, if they can keep the focus from straying from the mission of Jesus Christ to a focus on fellowship and fun. By examining early Methodist

Class Meetings, three components of community formation become clear. These components are: 1) a focus on the Bible and commitment to the written revelation of God to the Church; 2) a focus on continuing the work of Jesus Christ in the world today, the *Missio Dei*; and 3) the commitment to accountable, Christian fellowship. Community formation happens only when all three components are present.

Another way of describing this theory is to understand community as the surface of a three-legged stool. Community remains supported only if all three legs are in place. If only one or two legs are being used the community, the stool top, will fall over. In other words, if the church focuses only on Bible study, community will not develop. The same is true regarding congregations who are out of balance in the areas of service/mission or fellowship.

John Wesley understood how to go about community formation. The early Class Meetings had all three components that support community. Steven Manskar in his book that redefines the early Class Meetings, *Accountable Discipleship: Living in God's Household*, states, "A consequence of weekly accountability and prayer support from group members is that each person is helped to nurture his or her relationship to God."<sup>1</sup> Manskar is mainly interested in the "internal" function of accountability groups within a local congregation's life. Therefore, Manskar emphasizes serving people's needs, mutual accountability and prayer rather than the ability of these groups to create community. However, Manskar does recognize the centrality of Bible study and accountable fellowship in early Class Meetings.<sup>2</sup> Manskar's understanding falls short, however, in the

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<sup>1</sup> Steven W. Manskar, *Accountable Discipleship: Living in God's Household* (Nashville, TN: Discipleship Resources, 2000), 10.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

area of mission. Manskar focuses on the internal, caring for each other, where as the early Class Meetings did not limit themselves to caring only for each other.

“The practical expression of Methodist social concern can be divided into two groups: giving that was channeled through the Society and . . . additional acts of generosity by individual Methodists.”<sup>3</sup> These early Methodists created mission organizations, recruited Methodist friends and ministered in a wide rage of evangelistic and social programs. One of the most famous of these early Methodist-initiated groups was the Strangers’ Friend Society that looked after the sick and poor regardless of nationality or religious affiliation.<sup>4</sup>

The second presupposition is that ministry is incarnational in nature. The incarnation starts with God coming near to humanity and addressing their needs. However, Jesus did not move in a vacuum. The incarnation represents God’s desire to be in relationship *with* humanity. Jesus did not only do ministry *to* humanity, but responded to the needs as expressed by humanity. As Wilbert Shenk states: “The ministry of Jesus is notable for its clarity in focus and the flexibility of its response. In that way, Jesus allowed the other person to set the agenda. But Jesus always responded out of who he was and what he represented.”<sup>5</sup> As followers of Jesus Christ, the Church must follow Jesus’ example and move from doing ministry *to* people to doing ministry *with* people.

In many urban congregations, people have given up. The people left in the congregation after years of decline no longer live in the neighborhood. Many of these

<sup>3</sup> Lloyd, *Eighteenth-Century Methodism*, 123.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 124.

<sup>5</sup> Wilbert R. Shenk, “The Whole Is Greater than the Sum of the Parts: Moving Beyond Word and Deed,” *Missionology* January (1993): 73.

congregations have come to understand their ministry in terms of presence. While this presence may be a significant mode of ministry in some contexts, it is significantly less than the incarnational standard presented in Jesus Christ. It is not good enough to be a church *in* the community.

Moving a congregation from the ministry of presence to active engagement of the community is a difficult task. The first step for many congregations is to venture out into the community to do ministry, returning into the secure boundaries of the church as soon as ministry is accomplished. This form of ministry often defines those outside the church as “them” and those inside the church as “us.”

Congregations that open their doors to the surrounding community are not exempt from doing ministry *to* the community. Congregations can invite the community into the church building without inviting them into a relationship of equals. A good example of this is a soup kitchen where those serving do not interact with those receiving food. While people do get a meal, there is a clear separation between those serving and those being served. Furthermore, ministering *to* people can lead to paternalism very quickly as a congregation makes decisions for a community regarding what they really need. The magnificence of the incarnation is that in Jesus, God became human. There was no separation, and this is the model that the Church is called to emulate.

The two theoretical presuppositions guiding the development of the Generation – to-Generation Tutoring Program and the overall project are, in short, that community is formed through common experiences of word, mission and accountable fellowship and that congregations are called to be in ministry *with* the community. Both of these presuppositions require that an inwardly-focused congregation invites other people into fellowship and allows the community’s needs to shape the congregation’s ministry.

### Starting Point

In light of these two theoretical presuppositions, the discussion will now turn to the state of Plainfield United Methodist Church before the Generation-to-Generation tutoring program began in October 2003.

As stated in Chapter One, Plainfield United Methodist Church has been a congregation in decline for many years. As a result, the remaining people “circled the wagons” to keep out any danger or threat to the remaining core. While many might suppose that this situation would create a strong sense of community, the opposite was true, considering the definition of community stated above. The biblical component was anemic at best. Plainfield United Methodist Church had no Sunday school program when the author arrived. We were finally able to get four senior adults to participate in the Bible study on Sunday morning. There were no midweek Bible studies after the first year since nobody would come. In addition, nobody in the congregation was attending outside Bible studies. There simply was no interest.

The Mission component was visible with Plainfield’s commitment to North End Community Ministry and Second Saturday Supper. However, there were only six individuals actively engaged in these programs. In addition, evangelism did not exist within the congregation for at least twenty years. People had come to believe that evangelism was imposing on another’s privacy. With less than ten percent of the congregation involved in fulfilling the mission of Christ in the world, the focus grew increasingly inward.

Fellowship was the focus of Plainfield’s cooperative life. However, without the other two components of community, the fellowship was not biblical community but friendship. Dietrich Bonhoeffer in this book *Life Together: a Discussion of Christian*

*Fellowship* holds human love and Christian fellowship or spiritual love in opposition to one another. For the purposes of this discussion, accountable fellowship encompasses spiritual love while inwardly focused fellowship or love is Bonhoeffer's human love.

Human love lives by uncontrolled and uncontrollable dark desires; spiritual love lives in the clear light of service ordered by the truth. Human love produces human subjection, dependence, constraint; spiritual love creates freedom of the brethren to the Word. Human love breeds hothouse flowers; spiritual love creates fruits that grow healthily in accord with God's good will in the rain and storm and sunshine of God's outdoors. The existence of any Christian life together depends on whether it succeeds at the right time in bringing out the ability to distinguish between a human ideal of God's reality, between spiritual and human community.<sup>6</sup>

Bonhoeffer goes on to say that unless a community is willing to press on and even jeopardize human love, they will never move into biblical community that is characterized by spiritual love.<sup>7</sup> Living in a protective circle for so many years created a deep sense of togetherness and love, but as Bonhoeffer warned, it became an objective and the core value of the community. In other words, Plainfield United Methodist Church was trapped in human love not willing to risk losing what they had to find the fullness of what God promises through Christ Jesus.

It is important to note that the author never judged the people of Plainfield United Methodist Church for this position. However, it is the role of every pastor to lead the people to a fuller understanding of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. Therefore, a key motivator in designing the Generation-to-Generation Tutoring Program has been to draw the people of Plainfield into biblical community characterized by spiritual love.

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<sup>6</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together: a Discussion of Christian Fellowship* (San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco, 1954), 37.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

The existing outreach ministries at Plainfield United Methodist Church were not only inwardly focused but those few outreach ministries were also ministries *to* the neighborhood. A small group of individuals were trying to reach out into the community through a number of programs, but they were getting frustrated that nobody from the community was even visiting the church. The people of Plainfield U. M. C. were involved in distributing food *to* the neighborhood, gave a dozen bikes each year *to* children in the neighborhood, and provided a free meal on the second Saturday of each month *to* the neighborhood. As described above, ministry *to* the community is characterized by an “us” and “them” mentality and tends toward paternalism. The people of Plainfield United Methodist Church needed to envision a new way of relating to the surrounding neighborhood. The role of the pastor, in this type of situation, becomes that of encourager and guide; working to prevent burn out and helping those committed individuals discover a new possibility for themselves and the neighborhood.

### **Program Description**

The uniqueness of this project is that there is a program embedded in the Doctor of Ministry Project. The Generation-to-Generation Tutoring Program is a valid ministry, but it is only a vehicle that any congregation can replace at will to reproduce the project that focuses on congregational renewal and ethnic integration. I will first describe the Generation-to-Generation Tutoring Program and then discuss the project goals and methodology in a separate section entitled Project Description.

This section will describe the Generation-to-Generation Tutoring Program through the development and startup phases. Once the broad focus of the program was identified—high-risk youth and academic tutoring—three Context Associates were

selected who had a passion for this type of ministry. They were: 1) James (JR) Pittman; 2) Rev. Patricia Clark; and 3) Tracie Green. JR had already become a stakeholder through the visioning process and the desire to have the college students from Generation-to-Generation Ministries actively engaged in the ministry of a local congregation. Rev. Clark, a member of Plainfield United Methodist Church, has been involved with community-based ministry for the past twenty years. Tracie Green, also a recent member of Plainfield United Methodist Church, would serve as the Program Director and church's Minister of Youth. All three of the Context Associates would be active participants in the Generation-to-Generation Tutoring Program and the Doctor of Ministry Project. As African-Americans, the Context Associates would also help ensure the program was representative of the community we would be serving.

The overall structure of the program was decided before the Context Associates met due to a grant that was received. It was decided that there would be two hours of tutoring using the student's homework assignments (see Appendix B), a family style meal for the next hour, followed by a traditional youth group that would start back up at Plainfield United Methodist Church. This broad structure would allow the program to get referrals and money from State agencies since there was a clear and voluntary break between academic programs and evangelistic and discipleship programs. In addition, it was decided that all tutors would come from the collaborator's ministry contexts and that they would be known to exhibit mature Christian behavior and pass a State of Michigan background check.

Before the program started, it was decided that the Context Associates and I would meet four times to plan program and delegate responsibilities, September 3<sup>rd</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup>, 2003. The first meeting was to define the program mission and goals. The

second meeting was to delegate responsibilities for recruiting mentors and students and to start talking about program structure. The third meeting was to plan the meals and delegate responsibility for recruiting volunteers from within the Plainfield United Methodist Church and the community to help. The last meeting was designed to approve permission slips, update each other on the progress of delegated tasks, and make any changes if needed. At this meeting, the Context Associates and I decided my time would be involved in the initial startup of the program and I would move into a staff-supervisory role. I would be directly involved again at the end of the year as we started evaluating the effect of the Generation-to-Generation Tutoring Program on Plainfield United Methodist Church as a whole.

The Generation-to-Generation Tutoring Program's mission is "*to empower high-risk youth through education and positive relationships while hearing the good news of Jesus Christ and bonding them to the body of Christ.*" All the Context Associates had a strong commitment to the focus of the ministry before we had our first meeting. It was during the first meeting on September 3, 2003 that the mission was officially defined.

In addition to the mission statement, the first meeting of the Context Associates produced a timetable for the program and initial objectives. It was decided that the program would be run from Thursday, October 2, 2003 through Thursday May 27, 2004. The initial Generation-to-Generation Tutoring Program objectives were: 1) to recruit twelve mentors from within Generation-to-Generation Ministries to tutor one student each; 2) to recruit twelve students from the Kent County probation officers and from the community that were in academic crisis and either in foster care or the Juvenile Court System; 3) to see noticeable improvement in each student's academic performance; and, 4)

to present the opportunity to commit to Jesus Christ a minimum of three times during the program year.

The above objectives were to be measured in the following manner: 1) mentors were to be committed to the program by the October 2, 2003 start date, and if one had to drop out for unforeseen reasons we were to have a pool of potential mentors to draw from; 2) students should also be confirmed by the start date; 3) since academic records are confidential, we needed to rely on the probation officers' or guardians' feedback that would be collected three times during the program year; and, 4) providing a minimum of three opportunities to commit to Jesus Christ was designed into the schedule on the last meeting of the calendar year, December 11, 2003, the other times would be scheduled before Spring break and the end of the academic year.

As stated earlier, the Generation-to-Generation Tutoring Program is the vehicle to bring congregational renewal and ethnic integration to Plainfield United Methodist Church. Therefore, the program goals are important in that they created an environment that facilitated integration and renewal. In other words, the Generation-to-Generation Tutoring Program was designed to be the catalyst for the Doctor of Ministry project. However, even a program designed to be a catalyst needs to have measurable objectives to honor people's time and gifts as well as the people we are committed to minister *with*. If this commitment was not there, the Generation-to-Generation Program would deteriorate into a paternalistic outreach *to* the community in order to fulfill the Doctor of Ministry requirements.

The remaining Context Associate meetings expanded as others committed to the program as mentors or potential collaborators. Minor changes had to be dealt with, but we were ready to start on October 2, 2005 with eight mentors and eight students. By October

16, 2003, we were at capacity with twelve students and mentors. However, throughout the duration of the academic year an average of only ten students showed up each week.

In the first period, October 2<sup>nd</sup> through December 11<sup>th</sup>, we witnessed positive relationships being formed between the mentors and students; we saw a warming of the Plainfield U. M. C. volunteers toward the students as they helped in the kitchen; and we witnessed eight of the twelve students commit their lives to Jesus Christ on December 11, 2003. However, we had limited success in bonding these students to Plainfield U. M. C. One student was adopted from a group home and moved out of the area; three of the students started attending church with their parents; three students came occasionally to Plainfield U. M. C.; and the other student did not come back after the Christmas Break.

During the startup phase of the Generation-to-Generation Tutoring Program, all the objectives were achieved. Furthermore, the program was the first opportunity that Plainfield United Methodist Church had to be involved in ministry *with* the community. In addition, the congregation experienced opportunities to plan, study and implement the biblical mission of Jesus Christ in the world today; they created true community as African-American and Caucasian members worked together, learned together and helped each other be accountable in the spirit of love to achieving their assignments and showing love to the neighborhood students.

### **Project Description**

The overall Thesis that directs this project is not the Generation-to-Generation Tutoring Program but the testing of a hypothesis regarding congregational renewal and ethnic integration. The hypothesis is: congregational renewal ultimately comes from fulfilling the mission of Jesus Christ in the world; including both social action and

evangelism. The presuppositions addressed above unpack the full meaning of this statement. However, in short, renewal comes from being in ministry *with* the people and creating a biblical community characterized by spiritual love.

The Generation-to-Generation Tutoring Program was designed to have a dynamic, ongoing effect on Plainfield U. M. C. It was understood that only a few people would be involved in the decision-making process and actively support the program. It was designed to be a “mustard seed” that would grow as people were awakened to different modes of community engagement and as they experienced authentic, biblical community. I was further hypothesized that ethnic differences would break down as fellow believers studied the Bible together, worked in the Lord’s vineyard together and shared joys, concerns, hopes and dreams in an accountable relationship; as people lived in biblical community. The hope was, with the Holy Spirit’s intervention, this new unity would infuse the congregation and make lasting cultural changes.

With these hypotheses in mind, the Generation-to-Generation Tutoring Program was begun on October 2, 2003 and ran through May 27, 2004 to be the vehicle of subversion that would plant the seed of cultural change within the congregation. However, notes of the formative conversations within the Church Council were taken throughout the pre-operational phase showing that much of the hard work of integration and renewal began in those confrontations between congregational members’ points of view. Therefore, in order to understand the significance of this project and the reality of congregational life, the starting date of this project was the Church Council meeting on July 8, 2003, when the Generation-to-Generation Tutoring Program was first discussed.

There were three objectives to the overall project. First, to create an opportunity for the members of Plainfield United Methodist Church to study, pray, and commit to a

ministry *with* the community. Second, increase the number of constituents participating in all three components of biblical community, Bible study, mission, and accountable fellowship, from six to nine, a fifty percent increase. Third, increase the percentage of African-Americans participating in the worship services from ten percent to twenty-five percent. These three project objective are contingent on the same presuppositions that guided the Generation-to-Generation Tutoring Program.

The first objective is a process goal. Therefore, this objective would be achieved as the Generation-to-Generation Tutoring Program began and Plainfield United Methodist Church members became involved. However, the effects on the congregation of achieving the objective can be measured through a combination of a congregational survey, the official congregational worship and Sunday school attendance records, and the researcher's personal experiences as the pastor of the congregation, supported by extensive notes. These research methods where chosen to create a system of measurement that can take into account hard numerical data, the perceptions of individual constituent's attitudes toward members of a different ethnic background, and a method of evaluating the crucial indicators of integration, such as physical proximity and the development of personal relationships. Self-analysis of one's attitudes toward people of a different ethnicity cannot in itself be a true measurement of integration without supporting evidence. As the pastor, one is granted the unique position within a congregation to observe people in a variety of settings. In addition, a pastor is often given access to individual's deepest feelings and attitudes.

The second objective is measuring the programs effect on community formation within the congregation. This objective will measure how the long hours of study, discernment, and confrontation worked to create an increased of sense of biblical

community. This will be measured by the same methods described above. The numerical analysis will focus on increased participation in small groups, Sunday school and mission groups.

The third objective will use the same three methods of measurement but is an outcome-based objective with real numerical data provided by an impartial source: the ushers collect the data and the secretary enters the data into the automated attendance tracking software. However, this data will be triangulated through the congregational survey and the researcher's personal observations.

The collection of the survey data took place during the months of June, July and August of 2003. Pat Clark, one of the Context Associates, passed out the surveys during Sunday services on July 6, 2003 and July 13, 2003. Two colors of paper were used without explanation to the congregation. White paper was used for general use within the congregation. Blue paper was used for people that participated in the leadership of the Generation-to-Generation Tutoring Program. Leadership in the program was defined as direct program involvement or being part of the Church Council that made the original decision to proceed with the program. This system prevented the collection of data from being influenced by the person's knowledge of which category they were being placed.

## **CONCLUSION**

The Generation-to-Generation Tutoring Program emerged out of the expressed needs of the community and was designed to be a model for ministering *with* the community. However, the Generation-to-Generation Tutoring Program was designed only as the vehicle to be used to subvert the existing culture of Plainfield United Methodist Church and to be a catalyst for congregational renewal and ethnic integration. The Doctor of Ministry Project is focused on measuring the hypothesis that congregational renewal

ultimately comes from fulfilling the mission of Jesus Christ in the world; including both social action and evangelism. In short, renewal comes from being in ministry *with* the people and creating a biblical community characterized by spiritual love. Therefore, ministry *with* the people ought to result in relevancy to the surrounding neighborhood, prompting an ethnic mixture within the congregation similar to the surrounding neighborhood.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **RESULTS OF THE MODEL**

The preceding chapter described the Generation-to-Generation Tutoring Program and the overall project. The Generation-to-Generation Tutoring Program was designed only to be the catalyst for church renewal and ethnic integration at Plainfield United Methodist Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan. While the Generation-to-Generation Tutoring Program met all the program objectives and changed the lives of twenty students over the course of eight months, the Doctor of Ministry Project hypothesis is interested in measuring effects the tutoring program had on the congregation. There were three objectives that will be used to determine the outcome of the project. The three objectives were: 1) creating an opportunity for the members of Plainfield United Methodist Church to study, pray and commit to a ministry *with* the community; 2) numerical growth in the number of constituents participating in all three components of biblical community; and 3) numerical growth in the number of African-Americans participating in the worship services.

The first objective, creating an opportunity for the members of Plainfield United Methodist Church to study, pray and commit to a ministry *with* the community, is a process objective that was fulfilled in the pre-operational and startup phases of the Generation-to-Generation Tutoring Program. However, creating change of this magnitude within an inwardly focused and declining congregation will have measurable effects on the

corporate life of a congregation. This chapter, therefore, will examine the measurable effects that the first objective had on the congregation's mission and ethnic makeup.

Three methods will be utilized to collect and report the data that will be used in the following discussion regarding the effectiveness of the three project objectives. The three methods are: 1) analysis of church attendance records; 2) a congregational survey; and, 3) the researcher's personal experiences as the pastor of the congregation through copious notes. Select journal entries will be shared to illustrate the author's personal experiences and observations as the pastor of Plainfield United Methodist Church during this project. The remainder of this chapter will examine each research method in the above order.

### Numeric Analysis

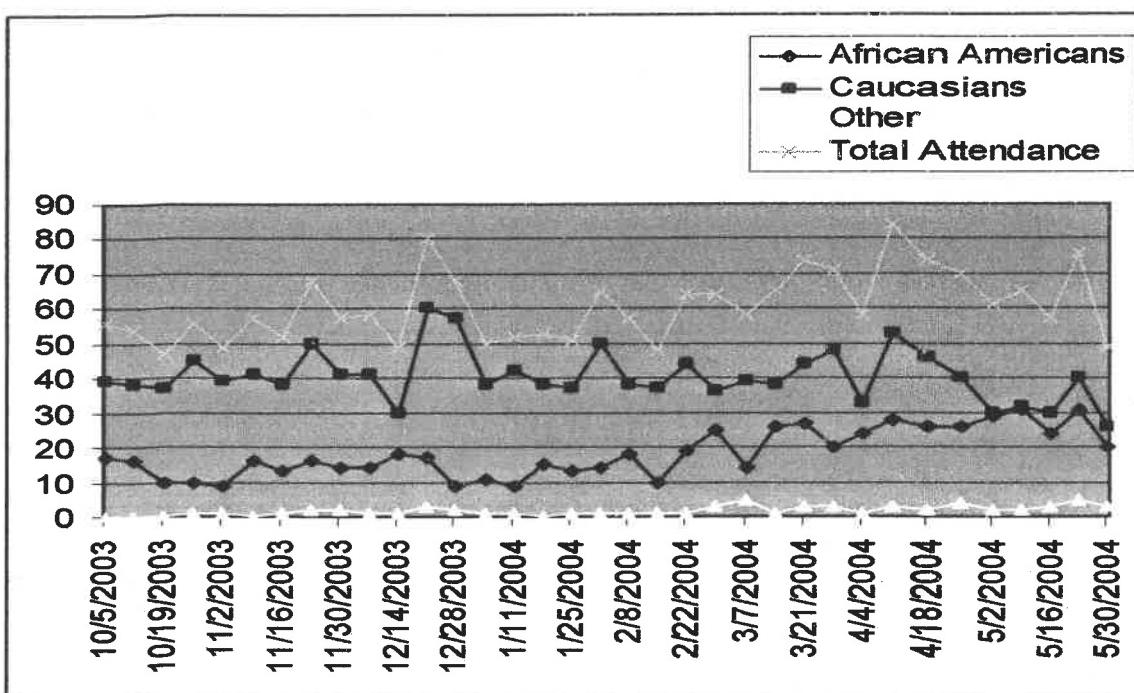
The *2002 Membership Report to the Annual Conference* lists the membership of Plainfield United Methodist Church at one hundred and thirty three and an average worship attendance of sixty, church school attendance at nineteen and youth fellowship attendance at four. The congregation's attendance records show that only six adults were involved in outreach ministries and there were no people listed as candidates for ordained ministry. Furthermore, there were six African-American members and one African member of the congregation with an average of three African-American and one African attending worship.

The *2003 Membership Report to the Annual Conference* listed the membership of Plainfield United Methodist Church at one hundred and twenty-four and an average worship attendance of seventy, church school attendance at fifteen and a youth fellowship attendance at ten. The congregation's attendance records show that thirteen people were involved in outreach ministries and there was one person listed as an inquiring candidate

for ordained ministry. Within the pre-operational and startup phases of the Generation-to-Generation Tutoring Program, the congregation experienced a net gain of ten in worship but a net loss of thirteen in membership. In fact, the congregation gained eleven new members, nine of which were African-American, and lost nineteen Caucasian members to transfer or withdrawal and four to death. Out of those nineteen transfers or withdrawals, twelve were from two families who have been the ringleaders of an entrenched group of lay people that functioned as gatekeepers. It will be shown below that the loss of these two families were a direct result of the congregation committing to the Generation-to-Generation Tutoring Program. The remaining seven members were inactive members that removed themselves after pastoral contact was made after a number of years. These members indicated they were already members elsewhere.

At the end of the Doctor of Ministry Project, the worship attendance and ethnic breakdown of those attending was examined on a weekly basis. Figure 4 shows this breakdown. The weekly attendance breakdown shows that during the Generation-to-Generation Tutoring Program the trajectory of African-American attendance was upward while Caucasian attendance was downward. The result was a fully integrated congregation.

The Generation-to-Generation Tutoring Program resulted in an increase in both the overall worship attendance and the number of African-Americans attending worship at Plainfield United Methodist Church. In addition, the number of people involved in outreach ministries increased from six to thirteen, an increase of over one hundred percent. By the end of May 2004, there were four people who had started the Candidacy Process for Ordained Ministry in the United Methodist Church, one African, two Caucasian and one African-American. At the end of 2003, the number of participants in



**Figure 4. Plainfield United Methodist Church Worship Service Attendance.**

the youth group had increased from four in 2002 to ten in 2003, a one hundred and fifty percent increase. Eight of the students in the youth group came from the Generation-to-Generation Tutoring Program. Sunday school attendance decreased, but this was due in part to the establishment of a youth group and de-emphasizing the Sunday program. While the total involved in Sunday school decreased, the congregation was able to start two much needed classes for children, a nursery class and one of first through third grades.

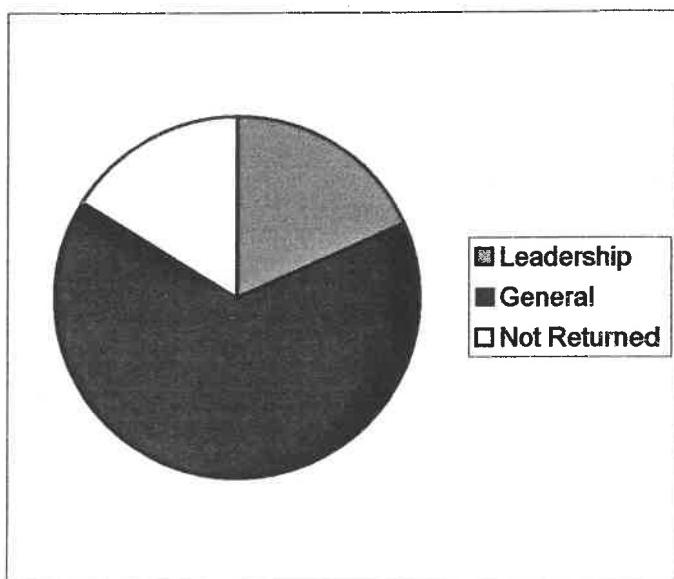
#### Congregation Survey

The Generation-to-Generation Tutoring Program was finished for the academic year on May 27, 2004. After meeting with the Context Associates on Thursday, June 10, 2004, we decided that Pat Clark would pass out a congregational survey on July 6, 2004 and July 13, 2004. These dates were chosen for two reasons. First, these were going to

be the first two weeks of Pat Clark's new work schedule that would ensure her availability on Sunday mornings. Second, the author had vacation time scheduled and it was agreed we would get more honest results if he was not involved in collecting the congregational survey. In addition, it was decided that better results would be achieved if the surveys were handed out and collected after each worship service. Furthermore, identical surveys were handed out to all people in attendance on the above dates. However, those designated as leaders by their participation in the Generation-to-Generation Tutoring Program or the Church Council were given surveys on blue paper and general constituents were given surveys on white paper. This would allow a comparison of data between those who were actively involved versus those only attending Plainfield United Methodist Church.

The number of surveys returned was pleasing. Out of a possible total of seventy-one, fifty-seven were returned. This equals an 80.28% return rate. Out of the fifty-seven returned surveys, sixteen out of a possible nineteen were from the leadership group and forty-one out of a possible fifty-two year from the general constituency of Plainfield United Methodist Church. Figure 5 (next page)is a visual representation of returned surveys.

The survey consisted of five questions with an appropriate scale of response. The five questions will be listed below as each question is examined. Participants were given four response options to the first two questions, five response options for the third and fourth questions, and three responses for the fifth question (see Appendix A). The answers were given numeric values equal to the subsequent number. Averages were then compiled to obtain three sets of numbers: 1) overall response; 2) leadership response; and, 3) general response.



**Figure 5. Returned Surveys.**

The first survey question was: "To what degree has the Generation-to-Generation Tutoring Program furthered ethnic integration at Plainfield United Methodist Church's worship services?" Out of a possible score of four, the overall response had a total of 2.89, a general response of 2.56, and a leadership response of 3.75. The responses show that there is a discrepancy a 1.19 difference in the averages of the leadership responses and the general responses. This is a significant difference that demands analysis.

During the duration of the Generation-to-Generation Tutoring Program, there were a number of people representing the general response category that suggested that they did not see a connection between the increased African-American attendance and the tutoring program. One way of analyzing the data would agree with their perception. Only two students from the tutoring program came to the worship services. However, those who participated or were involved in the Church Council experienced the energy and the commitment of the African-American constituents to the ministry process and the program that ministered *with* the community.

The second question was: “To what degree has the Generation-to-Generation Tutoring Program furthered ethnic integration at Plainfield Untied Methodist Church’s fellowship events?” Out of a possible score of four, the overall response had a total of 2.88, a general response of 2.63, and a leadership response of 3.5. The responses show that there is a discrepancy a .87 difference in the averages of the leadership responses and the general responses.

A careful analysis of the data collected in response to the second question shows that the leadership response group did not give as much weight to the influence of the tutoring program on the integration of the fellowship events at Plainfield United Methodist Church. The general response group’s response was the opposite. The data seems to indicate that since the general response group did not know who was connected with the tutoring program, they assumed that all the African-Americans who came to the fellowship events came through that connection. The reality was that most of the additional African-Americans at the fellowship events represented an established member’s extended family.

The third question was: “Over the past year, how has your attitude changed toward Plainfield United Methodist Church? Out of a possible score of five, the overall response had a total of 4.0, a general response of 3.85, and a leadership response of 4.38. The responses show that there is a discrepancy of a .53 difference in the averages of the leadership responses and the general responses.

A careful analysis of the data collected from the question shows that the people that remained at Plainfield United Methodist Church through duration of the Generation-to-Generation Tutoring Program have a “better” to “much better” attitude toward the church. This response was expected since the majority of people who were not

comfortable with ethnic integration or building relationships with the surrounding community had already stopped attending Plainfield United Methodist Church.

The fourth question was: "What impact has the Generation-to-Generation Tutoring Program had on the overall ministry of Plainfield United Methodist Church?" Out of a possible score of five, the overall response had a total of 3.89, a general response of 3.76, and a leadership response of 4.25. The responses show that there is a discrepancy of a .49 difference in the averages of the leadership responses and the general responses.

The responses are slightly lower than the responses to question three, but the same analysis holds true. However, it is significant that people's personal attitude is higher than the responses regarding the congregation's overall ministry. This can be explained since there were a few extremely unhappy and vocal members who continued to spread dissension. There were times when the congregation continued to be drawn into persistent conflicts that consumed a great deal of time and energy.

The fifth question was: "Has your involvement level at Plainfield United Methodist Church changed over the past year?" Out of a possible score of three, the overall response had a total of 2.21, a general response of 2.0, and a leadership response of 2.75. The responses show that there is a discrepancy of a .75 difference in the averages of the leadership responses and the general responses.

The intent of question five was to see if there is a correlation between questions three and four to the responder's participation level. This question, in reference to the other questions, will be a good indicator of congregational renewal beyond numerical growth. There were ten responses that indicated their level of participation was less over the past year, one indicated that the Generation-to-Generation had a "very negative" impact on Plainfield United Methodist Church, four a "negative" impact, three indicated

there was ‘none’, and two indicated a “positive” impact. The two responses that indicated less involvement but a positive response to the tutoring program’s impact on the congregation can be explained by the health concerns of two dedicated senior citizens within the congregation. Out of those who indicated that the tutoring program had a “positive” or “very positive” impact on the congregation, only two indicated “less involvement,” twenty-two had “the same” involvement, and twenty-one responded they had “more involvement.” These two comparisons seem to indicate there is a correlation between the perception of the impact of the tutoring program and individual involvement levels at Plainfield United Methodist Church.

Out of those who indicated that their attitude toward Plainfield United Methodist Church was “better” or “much better,” a total of thirty-four responders, only one indicated “less involvement,” thirteen had “the same” involvement, and twenty responded that they had “more involvement.” Out of the leadership response group there was not a single response that indicated they had “worse” or “much worse” attitudes toward Plainfield United Methodist Church. Out of this response group, fifteen had “more involvement” and only four indicated that their involvement remained “the same.” In short, those who were involved in decision-making or the hands-on ministry of the tutoring program had an improved attitude toward the congregation and were more involved. This indicates that program ownership and attitude are linked.

### **Personal Experience**

One of the realities of congregational life is that numbers and ratios cannot fully understand or explain the changes in people’s hearts and minds as they are touched by the Holy Spirit and changed. As the pastor of Plainfield United Methodist Church during the

duration of the Generation-to-Generation Tutoring Program, the author had the unique privilege of being involved lives of the people of the congregation. This privilege is to be cherished and protected. However, it gives the author a unique vantage point that is essential to assessing the mile markers that people and the congregation experiences toward church renewal and integration. Edited excerpts will be shared from the author's project journal that summarized his copious notes. Names of all people involved have been removed or changed with the exception of the Context Associates.

**July 8, 2003**--The Church Council Meeting was shocking. Before sending off a grant proposal to the Conference Council on Ministry (CCOM) to request \$5,000 to start the Generation-to-Generation Tutoring Program, I had taken the time to call eight key leaders on the Church Council to get their approval. I left messages for the two that I could not talk to, but they never returned my call. The other six Church Council members had excitedly agreed that I needed to pursue the funding even though we did not have full Church Council approval. The rationale was that we could always pull back at a later time since CCOM always had more projects than they had funding.

At this Church Council Meeting, there was a clash of worldviews and a major power struggle between the established, long-term leadership of Plainfield U. M. C. and a group that wanted to start reaching out into the community. The established leadership, represented by the Lay Leader who was one of the leaders that did not return my call, wanted to stop the project because I had not gotten approval before applying for the funds. The tactic was short-lived as the other Church Council Members stood up and defended the grant request and the project. The established leadership's tactic then shifted to a discussion around letting "those" people use the building.

There was a major breakthrough in the congregational dynamics as the conversation shifted to a discussion of wanting "those people" involved in and at Plainfield U. M. C. First, there was a major defection from the established leadership ranks as one lady passionately defended the appropriateness of outreach to both African-Americans in our community and juveniles in the Juvenile Court System. The change happened because she has three bi-racial grandsons and two of them have been in the Juvenile Court System. Second, the Church Council had the opportunity to define and

Church's role in a community by looking to the work of Jesus Christ. Both of these changes resulted in the Church Council Members changing their use of language from "those people" to identifying with the potential students as fellow human beings. As people struggling to be faithful, they responded to the opportunity.

**October 2, 2003**—The Generation-to-Generation Tutoring Program started today. We only had eight students and eight mentors. This was shy of our goal by four. We will continue to recruit and contact the Juvenile Court.

We had three members of Plainfield U. M. C. come to help. One helped in the kitchen and prepared the meal. Two others helped around the building but did not tutor. They showed the students and tutors around, and helped locate games and a television. I was glad to see some of the senior members taking part. It will be interesting to see if they continue, and if they will get more involved in the one-on-one tutoring.

**October 16, 2003**—We met our goal with twelve students and twelve tutors. The college students are building relationships and most of the students are staying for the youth group that is after the dinner. Last week, we had nine students and seven of them stayed.

We are still getting help from the senior members of Plainfield U. M. C. we now have four members that have gotten involved but our cook is coming every other Thursday. Since we got a late start with the grant money and a number of the tutors are not getting a stipend, we decided to get Pizza or something else one of the days we do not have a cook. I hope that we will be able to recruit another cook.

**December 11, 2003**—Today was the last day of G2G until January. We had a total of thirteen students involved in the program and twelve tutors. We also had four members of Plainfield U. M. C. involved in different ways. The good news is that two of the members started to stay for the youth group and are addressing the students rather than just watching them.

During dinner, we asked the students to share how the G2G Program helped them at school. Every student had a positive report. Six of the students passed because they were able to make up their homework assignments and get all their work done. One of the female students went from a "D" average the year before to a solid "A" average during her time in the G2G program.

J R Pittman, one of the Context Associates, spoke at the youth group and gave a Gospel message based on the student's

experiences in the court system. He told them that Jesus defends them and took on their punishment. Eight of the students responded to the Gospel message.

What a way to end the startup phase with eight students accepting Christ, four senior members of Plainfield U. M. C. witnessing this event and being involved. I talked to the Plainfield U. M. C. members after the Youth Group. They were excited about the change in the students' behavior and the progress that they had seen in their academic work.

**December 14, 2003**—One of the students that gave his life to Christ came to church today. We introduced him and celebrated his membership into the family of Christ. The Church also presented him with a Bible that one of the members bought for all eight of the new converts. It was a positive experience for Plainfield U. M. C., judging from the looks on most people's faces. There were a number of people that looked visibly upset, including the Lay Leader and a couple of other members of the established leadership group.

**January 8, 2004**—There were ten students that returned to the program from last year. We learned that Janet was adopted and moved out of the area. I am not going to be involved in the daily operations of the G2G Program but will stop by to keep the relationship alive.

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**February 22, 2004**—Pat Clark, one of the Context Associates, wrote a Black History Month play entitled *Old Joe*. The play was performed during the Sunday service. We had a decent attendance of sixty-four, but we had the Youth Group and Sunday school involved in the play. Two of the G2G students were involved. I made sure to mention that the G2G students were there.

*Old Joe* is about sharecropping and Jim Crow laws of the South before the Civil Rights Movement. The congregation was touched emotionally. I even saw a number of Caucasian members with tears in their eyes.

**March 2, 2004**—Tracie Green's father had his funeral at Plainfield U. M. C. even though he did not attend. The church was full of African-Americans and three Caucasian members of Plainfield U. M. C. came to the service. When I talked to them afterward, all three ladies said they came because they wanted to show their support of the Green family since Traci and her Uncle were both part of their family. The Plainfield women also helped prepare the desserts.

**March 7, 2004**-As the weather starts to warm up, three members have decided to walk the neighborhood to pray and share Christ with those they meet. Today was the first day and they came back excited. People were open to them and they prayed with a number of people. These people decided to do this on their own.

**March 14, 2004**-The witnessing teams went out again with five people this time. They came back even more excited since the people they prayed with last week sought them out for further prayer. They are committed to continuing this as a weekly event.

**March 21, 2004**—I realized that the Plainfield U. M. C. congregation is no longer self segregated. When the African-American members started coming they would sit on the East side

of the sanctuary and the Caucasian members would sit in the middle or West side. Looking out today, I realized that people were sitting together based on friendship rather than skin color. The couple of the G2G volunteers were sitting with Pat Clark and her family.

I talked to Pat Clark after the service and asked how long has this integration been going on since I just noticed it today. She said for at least a month.

**April 11, 2004**—Easter Sunday was a great success with a multi-cultural worship service. We had eighty-four in worship. The kids sang and it was a time of great joy for most of the people present. The “Smith” clan was visibly upset when the kids sang and when some of the African American members shared some memories of their Easter experiences.

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**April 15, 2004**—This is the Thursday after Easter. “B. Smith” volunteered to help in the office while the secretary took some vacation. She used the opportunity to share with me everything that I was doing wrong. We ended up having a good conversation after about an hour of listening to her complaints. She indicated that she and her husband were going to leave the church because they “don’t like the way the church is going.” I asked her to explain and she just shrugged. However, her main complaint during our conversation was that I seem to love “them” more than I love “us.” I assured her that if she and her husband felt God was calling them out, I would support them and bless them. Last year (early December), nine members of her extended family either transferred out or withdrew their membership in response to issues around ethnic integration.

**May 5, 2004**—The Children and Youth Choir sang today in the service. It was amazing to see. We had fifteen kids singing, three Caucasian, one Hispanic, and eleven Africa-Americas. The congregation has remained integrated in physical proximity and people seem to be building relationships across ethnic lines. One of the students from the G2G program has been rehearsing and sang with the choir. I made a big deal about his involvement since I have heard a number of members say that we get no benefits from the G2G Program. The members that have been voicing their concerns have not been involved in G2G program or the Church Council.

**May 14, 2004**—We had a Church Council meeting to discuss the possibility of Pat Clark becoming a Parish Nurse and working with Grand Rapids African American Health Institute to monitor blood pressure in the African-American Community surrounding the church and those involved at Plainfield U. M. C. All the discussions surrounding “those people” that took place at the beginning of the G2G Program were not voiced at all. The whole Church Council was very supportive of addressing this need that is being expressed from within the African-American community of Grand Rapids.

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**May 27, 2004**—The last session of the G2G program for the academic year. We had a total of twenty different students involved in the program and seventeen mentors. We also had the four consistent Plainfield U. M. C. members that helped as they could. We had a total of twelve students commit their lives to Jesus Christ, and every student showed academic improvement from when they started the program.

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### **Examination of Objectives**

As stated above, the first objective of creating an opportunity for the members of Plainfield United Methodist Church to study, pray and commit to a ministry *with* the community is a process objective that was fulfilled in the pre-operational and startup phases of the Generation-to-Generation Tutoring Program. The impact of this objective, however, has been far reaching. As stated in Chapter Four, changing the ministry philosophy from an inward focus to an outward focus that allows ministry to emerge from the expressed needs of the community is a key component involved in congregational

renewal. Chapter Three refers to the work of William Abraham that defines renewal as doctrinal renewal; a way of articulating and living Christian faith in the modern world. It stands to reason that any new approach to ministry will have repercussions throughout the congregation's corporate life and structures as people learn to articulate and live their faith in the modern world.

As Plainfield United Methodist Church engaged in ministry *with* the community through the Generation-to-Generation Tutoring Program, there were a number of measurable repercussions that indicated renewal within the congregation. First, there was a one hundred and fifty percent increase in the number of people from six to thirteen engaged in outreach ministries. Second, four people answered the call to ordained ministry from within the congregation. Third, although adult Sunday school participation decreased, there was an increase in the number adults involved in teaching children in Sunday school, and four people started attending Bible College during the week. Fourth, there was a measurable increase in overall participation levels of the congregation as confirmed through the congregational survey. Lastly, more ministries *with* the community were being developed, i.e. the collaboration with Grand Rapids African American Health Institute.

The second objective was designed to measure any increase in the number of constituents participating in all three aspects of biblical community: Bible study, mission and fellowship. The data shows that this objective was successfully completed. Since the congregational focus was already on fellowship, the data was focused on the remaining aspects of biblical community. First, Bible study increased in all age groups except adults. Two children's Sunday school classes were added, the youth group increased from four to ten in the first three months of the Generation-to-Generation Tutoring Program, and four

adults started attending Bible College during the week. Second, there was a measurable increase in the mission aspect as well. There was an increase in the number of people engaged in outreach ministries. This increase included four members who volunteered in the Generation-to-Generation Tutoring Program. In addition, four people accepted the call to service in the United Methodist Church as ordained ministers. Lastly, people started to use their gifts in service to the congregation and the community in both evangelistic endeavors and social justice, neighborhood evangelism and the parish nurse program respectively.

The third objective of increasing the number of African-Americans participating in the worship services was also a success. Figure 4 tracks worship attendance by ethnic makeup and clearly shows an increase. The survey shows that the overall congregation and especially the leadership response group attributed this growth to the Generation-to-Generation Tutoring Program. The African-American participation is also confirmed through the author's personal experiences as illustrated by his project journal. A children's choir was established that was predominately African-American. African-Americans shared their Easter experiences in the Black Church, and the congregation celebrated Black History Month with a children and youth program entitled *Old Joe*.

This project started with the hypothesis that congregational renewal ultimately comes from fulfilling the mission of Jesus Christ in the world; including both social action and evangelism. In short, renewal comes from being in ministry *with* the people and creating biblical community. Therefore, ministry *with* the people ought to result in relevancy to the surrounding neighborhood, prompting an ethnic mixture within the congregation similar to the surrounding neighborhood. The three objectives listed above were established to test this hypothesis. All three objectives were accomplished with

triangulated data from numerical analysis of the congregation's attendance records, a congregational survey and my personal experience as pastor of Plainfield United Methodist Church as reported in my project journal. Therefore, the hypothesis is proven to be true. Congregational renewal and ethnic integration are achievable by fulfilling the entire mission of Jesus Christ.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **REFLECTION, SUMMARY, AND CONCLUSION**

The Generation-to-Generation Tutoring Program and the Doctor of Ministry thesis have taken three and a half years of the author's life to accomplish. A project that has been this consuming requires a serious time of reflection and summation. This chapter provides the opportunity to do justice to the final stages of the program. The hope is that this chapter will help guide other congregations through collaborative ministry efforts and to help congregations prepare for the hard work of congregational renewal and ethnic integration. The remainder of this chapter will be divided into three sections: 1) Reflections; 2) Project Summary; and 3) Final Conclusion.

#### **Reflections**

Seminary does not prepare pastors in the areas of project development and collaboration. The strength of a Doctor of Ministry Program is that this deficit is corrected. However, with the necessity of collaboration as a prerequisite for many grant programs, there was a steep learning curve required. Much of what was learned about the practical implications of collaborative ministries came in response to shortcomings and frustrations experienced while implementing the Generation-to-Generation Tutoring Program. The goal of this section is to summarize seven key elements of collaboration and cooperation that a congregation should utilize if they want to successfully navigate

through the maze of collaborative ministries. This section builds upon the four principles of collaboration described in Chapter Two. The seven key elements of collaboration are: 1) a defined congregational mission; 2) a vision of what the program needs to accomplish; 3) screening and acquiring collaborative partners; 4) identifying programs goals and structures in conjunction with collaborators; 5) becoming proficient at conflict resolution; 6) agreeing on responsibilities; and 7) having a clear exit strategy from the collaboration.

The seven areas will be discussed in the above order.

Having *a defined congregational mission* is extremely important. Reflecting on the Generation-to-Generation Tutoring Program experience, the author realizes that it would have been better for the congregation if they had gone through the revisioning and mission process before starting the program. Misunderstandings can often be avoided if the congregation as a whole has a clear sense of where God is calling the congregation; they become shareholders rather than gatekeepers. During this project, Plainfield United Methodist Church had the opportunity to go through a revisioning and mission process. That process helped the congregation embrace change. The lesson learned is to slow down when possible and accomplish the important work of recasting vision and mission before getting involved in a transformative project. This is the first key element of collaboration.

The second key element of collaboration is *having a vision of what the program needs to accomplish*. Before “shopping” for collaborative partners that will help accomplish the ministry, make sure the leadership team has clearly defined outcomes that they want to accomplish. During this project, a couple of potential collaborators were eliminated because they were only interested in tutoring and would not be involved in the evangelistic component of the project. A great deal of time and energy were wasted on these potential collaborators because there was not a written statement of objectives that

all parties could evaluate according to their agency's mission. It would have been helpful and saved a great deal of time and energy to have clearly defined outcomes written down before talking to potential collaborative partners.

Once the congregation knows what they want the developing program to accomplish, the third key element of collaboration is *screening and acquiring collaborative partners*. It is important for pastors and congregational leaders to be active in the larger community. By serving on non-profit boards, volunteering with para-church organizations, or volunteering at agencies around town, pastors and congregational leaders are exposed to people, agencies and ministries that are potential collaborative partners. However, there is no substitute for networking. If people are interested in collaborative ministries, it is a good idea to start collecting congregational, ministry and agency literature and develop personal contacts within each group. Those that are not compatible with your congregation may be used later as referral agencies.

Screening potential collaborators is of the utmost importance. Some of the questions that need to be asked are listed below. First, what capacities does the potential collaborative agency (church or ministry) have that our agency lacks? If potential agencies do not bring needed skill sets or financial resources, it will not be a productive collaborator. Second, are the agency's mission statements compatible? Third, are the agency's management structures and/or philosophies compatible, or are they flexible enough to create a new project structure together? Fourth, can the key personnel work together or are there obvious personality conflicts or differences in management styles that would paralyze the project? Fifth, are the corporate cultures compatible? This may be difficult to answer without taking the time to understand a potential collaborative agency.

However, if one agency is a progressive learning organization and the other is a traditional “gate-keeping” organization, the collaboration will most likely not work.

The fourth key element of collaboration is *identifying programs goals and structures in conjunction with collaborators*. A successful collaboration is when all parties achieve their agency goals and the combined program goals. Therefore, the time to identify the program goals and structures is after the collaborators have agreed to work together to achieve defined outcomes. By waiting until the collaborators are in place, two indicators of a successful collaboration are achieved. First, each collaborator is contributing their expertise to the project. This allows all parties to build organizational capacity by acquiring knowledge and skills from the other organizations. Second, it allows all organizations to be shareholders in the program rather than resources for one organization’s program.

Every group of people will experience conflict. Conflict is inevitable. The Church of Jesus Christ is not exempt from conflicts that can destroy ministries and people if the congregational leadership is not prepared to deal with it in a constructive manner. Collaborative programs are no different. The fifth key element of collaboration is *becoming proficient at conflict resolution*. Whether one is working in the church or within a collaborative relationship, be prepared to engage and resolve conflicts. During the program development phase, minor conflicts were experienced with one potential collaborator. Once both parties understood the goals were incompatible, they disengaged with no hard feelings. In fact, a year later, Plainfield United Methodist Church was able to cooperate with this organization on another program.

However, attempting to break down the walls of ethnicity and class touched a deep chord within people’s worldviews; they are hotbeds from which conflict erupts.

While this has not been discussed in detail in the previous chapters, it was true within this project. In fact, engrained conflicts within Plainfield United Methodist Church around the issues of ethnicity and integration eventually led to the author's decision to leave Plainfield United Methodist Church on June 1, 2005. However, through a painful time of conflict, I learned to engage conflict and master a number of strategies of conflict resolution. Due to the limited scope of this project, the reader is referred to *Quest: Guidebook for Local Congregations*<sup>1</sup> as a starting point to develop the necessary conflict resolution skills needed to engage in ministry as a whole, but especially for those who are called to transformational ministries around the issues of ethnicity and class.

The hardest lesson learned throughout the Generation-to-Generation Tutoring Program is that people do not always mean what they say, or that they are not willing to pay the price for what they agreed to provide. Therefore, the sixth key element of collaboration is to *agree on responsibilities*. Initially the Kent County Juvenile Probation Office was going to refer students to the Generation-to-Generation Tutoring Program and supply a stipend for the college students who tutored. The stipends were part of an established program and since we had a clear separation between the tutoring and evangelistic portions of the program, we were eligible for those funds. However, two months before the program started, we were informed that they had cut the program. In addition, after the initial startup of the program, Calvin College offered to tutor the same students. As a result, the probation officers stopped making referrals to the Generation-to-Generation Tutoring Program. It was later learned that a simple Memo of Agreement, sometimes called a Memo of Understanding, could have secured both the funding and

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<sup>1</sup> *Quest: Guidebook for Local Congregations* (Grand Rapids: MI: West Michigan Annual Conference, 2000), 3-47.

source of students. A Memo of Agreement is a standard operating procedure for collaboration programs. If another congregation wants to develop a collaborative ministry, it is highly recommended that they first acquire someone with experience in the areas of program development and collaboration. This person can be from within or from outside the congregation. There are many people within a congregation that have this type of knowledge but they do not know that it is applicable to the life of the congregation. If a congregation needs to acquire this knowledge from outside the congregation, it is suggested that they contact a local university with programs in either Social Work or Public Administration.

All collaborations, by nature, will end someday. Who is going to own what equipment? Who will be responsible for maintaining any legal documentation? These are only a couple of the easier questions that need to be answered while the program is being designed and implemented. The harder and more important questions for a congregation to address have to do with building the capacity of the congregation. What do we need to learn from our collaborative partners? What knowledge do we need to obtain? What skills do we need to learn? What funding do we need to acquire? These questions are contingent upon the understanding that no collaboration will last forever. A congregation often feels like they are using others if they are asking these types of questions. However, if collaboration is viewed through the biblical framework of the body of Christ, the understanding changes to that of growth and natural division. Stated another way, a healthy cell will grow and divide as the body develops. Collaborative program conception and natural conception are similar in that both will take DNA from one contributor and create something new as it bonds with the other contributor's DNA. All contributors to a

collaborative program must keep this in mind from the very beginning and *have a clear exit strategy*, the final key element of collaboration.

### **Project Summary**

The overall Doctor of Ministry Project was designed to test the hypothesis that congregational renewal ultimately comes from fulfilling the mission of Jesus Christ in the world including both social action and evangelism. Since Plainfield United Methodist Church is in an integrated neighborhood, it was further hypothesized that renewal would also bring ethnic integration as the church incarnated the mission of Jesus Christ in the neighborhood. The Generation-to-Generation Tutoring Program, therefore, was set up to be the catalyst or primary form of intervention within the congregation to bring about congregational renewal. This section will examine first the objectives and outcomes of the project and then will summarize the theological principles that emerged from this project.

The hypothesis was measured through three objectives. The first was a process objective that was contingent on establishing a program that emerged from the neighborhood's expressed needs. This program was to be measured by the successful completion and involvement of the church constituents and leaders in the hard work of establishing a ministry *with* the community. The second objective was to increase the number of constituents' participation in all three components of biblical community—Bible study, mission and accountable fellowship. The intent of this objective was to experience a fifty percent increase in members' participation in outreach ministries, from six to nine. The third objective was to increase the African-American in the participating in the worship services from ten to twenty-five percent.

The program objectives were measured through a combination of methods. First, there was a careful analysis of the congregation's attendance records to track Sunday school attendance and ethnicity of the worshiping congregation. Second, there was a questionnaire distributed to the congregation that was designed to track attitudes and preserved outcomes of the project in both the congregation and the official leadership. Third, the model was evaluated by the author and pastor's personal experiences, focusing on attitudes and other subjective indicators that are difficult to quantify, i.e. physical proximity to people of another ethnic group during worship services.

The program proved to be successful in integrating the congregation to approximately 40% African-American by the end of the project timeline. The attitudes however changed most notably in the leadership core that was actively involved in the decision-making process of the program. Within the overall congregation, there was a less positive movement. These numbers were also skewed due to the exodus of a number of disgruntled Caucasian members. The real success was evident in those subjective indicators that are difficult to codify. During the pre-operational phase and the initial startup phase of the Generation-to-Generation Tutoring Program, seating during worship service was unofficially segregated. The African-Americans sat in one spot huddled together and the Caucasians sat in a separate area with little contact between the two groups. Surprisingly, the physical segregation in worship broke down as the people engaged in mission and Bible study together. The final outcome was that the congregation did experience integrate and renewal, but renewal was somewhat limited to the stakeholders within the Generation-to-Generation Tutoring Program.

The project hypothesis relied heavily upon some theological positions and presuppositions. Therefore, it is appropriate summarize the theological principles that

emerged from this project. It was the position of the author that congregational renewal will only happen when the balance between the inclusive and exclusive tendencies of the Church are maintained. In addition, renewal is also contingent upon maintaining the theological integrity of the Church by preaching and teaching historical orthodoxy. These two concerns come together in the missiological concept of *Missio Dei*, the mission of God. *Missio Dei* includes the self-revelation of God in the person of Jesus Christ, the revelation of God in the biblical witness, and both social action and evangelism promoting *shalom* and reconciliation in all facets.

A unifying theory of renewal was sought that would unite the above concepts while having practical ramifications that could bring a new spiritual reality to the congregation of Plainfield United Methodist Church. The theory of renewal that guided the project was based on the work William Abraham as he argues for doctrinal renewal. While William Abraham focuses on “how to articulate their primary doctrines in the modern world,”<sup>2</sup> the author rejects the Enlightenment notion that belief and action can be separated. Therefore, if one is to rediscover how one is to articulate their primary doctrines in a modern world, one must also live those doctrines out as individual believers and within the corporate life of a congregation. Only then can a congregation experience authentic renewal. Plainfield United Methodist Church made significant advances toward authentic renewal by balancing the internal and external tendencies of a congregation by initiating a community formation model as an integral part of fulfilling the project objectives and proving the project hypothesis.

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<sup>2</sup> Abraham, *Waking*, 89.

Renewal and ethnic integration are difficult within an established congregation. Once the seed is planted, it will start to grow. The Generation-to-Generation Tutoring Program was one such seed that continued to grow. However, because of the deeply held worldviews encompassing issues of ethnicity, the congregational leadership must remain vigilant in confronting bias within their midst.

### **Conclusion**

The work of congregational renewal and ethnic integration are difficult in established congregations. If it was not difficult, there would not be numerous mainline urban congregations that are experiencing decline and isolation. The program used within the overall project was the Generation-to-Generation Tutoring Program. The tutoring program was designed to be a catalyst for congregational transformation through a process of subversion. However, to reproduce this project, a congregation will need to do the hard work of needs assessment *with* the surrounding neighborhood. The Generation-to-Generation Tutoring Program experienced program success. The real goal of the overall project, however, was to change the congregational culture of Plainfield United Methodist Church. To this end, the project was successful bringing about the numerical growth of the congregation, integrating the congregation to be more like the neighborhood that it serves, and bringing about real attitudinal change of the remaining constituents. The process was long and difficult but by ministering *with* the neighborhood and building biblical community, transformation and integration are possible.

**APPENDIX A**  
**GENERATION-TO-GENERATION INFORMATION PACKET**

*Generation to Generation Ministries*  
**Information Packet**



**"Linking the Generations,  
Bridging the Gaps"**

JR Pittman, Executive Director

3501 Lake Eastbrook Blvd. SE • Suite 114  
Grand Rapids, MI 49546  
Phone: 616-940-4016  
Fax: 616-940-4129  
[jr@g2gministries.com](mailto:jr@g2gministries.com)  
[www.g2gministries.com](http://www.g2gministries.com)

## MISSION STATEMENT:

**Generation to Generation Ministries** mission is to reconnect the generations by evangelizing the Good News of Jesus Christ to today's urban youth and young adults and bringing them into discipleship communities within the local church.

## STATEMENT OF FAITH

Generation to Generation Ministries Believes:

- The Holy Bible to be the infallible Word of God, that it is His holy and inspired Word, and that it is of supreme and final authority.
- In one God, eternally existing in three persons -- Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
- Jesus Christ was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary. He led a sinless life, took on Himself all our sins, died and rose again, and is seated at the right hand of the Father as our mediator and advocate.
- That all men everywhere are lost and face the judgment of God, and need to come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ through His shed blood on the cross.
- That Christ rose from the dead and is coming soon.
- In holy Christian living, and that we must minister to the poor and social needs of our fellowmen.
- We must dedicate ourselves to serve the local church by reaching the lost to bring them into the fellowship of believers to be discipled to grow in their spiritual gifts
- In the spiritual unity of all believers through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and we must dedicate ourselves to bridge and link the generations of young and old together to carry on the gospel message from generation to generation.

## **Leadership**

### **G2G Staff Biographies**

*JR Pittman*

**Executive Director & Founder**

JR & his wife Evette are the proud parents of 2 boys. They are members of Resurrection Fellowship Church. JR's background with the African American church and 12+ years with Young Life and InterVarsity Christian Fellowship ministries enhances is strong gifts in evangelism, worship leading, vision casting and multi-ethnicity in racial reconciliation. His leadership development focus at various metro-Grand Rapids, Michigan college campuses is expanding throughout West Michigan and beyond. JR studied at Cornerstone University in Ministry Leadership.

*Paul Spiering*

**Business Director**

Paul's heart for the Lord led him to begin serving G2G's expanding ministry in August, 2003. Paul's business background involves several years in senior marketing management & business development positions as well as experience in commercial banking. Paul has a BA from Calvin College and an MBA from Indiana University. He is a member of Ada Bible Church in Grand Rapids.

### **G2G Board of Directors**

*Phil DeVries*

**President**

Phil and his wife are the parents of 4 children. He is active at Ada Bible Church & is a small business owner. Phil serves on the board for other local organizations as well.

*Eric Brown*

**Treasurer**

Eric and his wife are the parents of 3 children. He is a member of Community Baptist Church serving on the deacon board and as a teacher. Eric is an Accountant at a local Grand Rapids business.

*Skot Welch*

**Director**

Skot and his wife have 2 children. He serves on the Music Team as well as a Business Leadership group at Grand Rapids First Assembly church. He is a Partner at a local West Michigan company and serves on the board at Oakdale Christian School.

*Eula Gaddis*

**Director**

Eula is married and does not have children. He is the Pastor of Prince of Peace Baptist Church. He also has worked as a business consultant.

*Kris Chayer*

**Director**

Chris and his wife are the parents of 3 children. He and his family attend Resurrection Life church. Chris is a small business owner.

## Ministry Foundation

### ***Reconnecting Lost Generations***

Through several years of working in urban-based student ministries, this we are certain of - our society is increasingly birthing a generation of "lost" students. We see morals declining, family units decaying, parentlessness abounding, Christ & the Church being rendered irrelevant and our children & students left with a gaping void. We don't believe these are irrational feelings and emotions. Just look at some recent statistics

#### **From Barna Research .....**

- Views on "Morally Acceptable" Behaviors, By Generation

	18 & 19 yr. olds	20-39	39-57	58+
<b>Gambling</b>	75%	67%	60%	51%
<b>living with someone of the opposite sex without being married, sometimes called co-habitation</b>	75%	72%	60%	41%
<b>enjoying sexual thoughts or fantasies about someone</b>	79%	68%	60%	40%
<b>Having an abortion</b>	55%	48%	46%	36%
<b>having a sexual relationship with someone of the opposite sex to whom you are not married</b>	54%	56%	40%	24%
<b>Looking at pictures of nudity or explicit sexual behavior</b>	50%	48%	38%	23%
<b>Using profanity</b>	60%	49%	30%	20%
<b>getting drunk</b>	50%	48%	33%	15%
<b>having a sexual relationship with someone of the same sex</b>	40%	41%	32%	14%
<b>using drugs not prescribed by a medical doctor</b>	20%	22%	16%	12%

- Church Attendance Sagging:

Teens (52% attend); 20-29 year olds (31%); 30-39 (42%); 40+ (49%)

..... from high school graduation to age 25 there is a 42% drop in weekly church attendance and a 58% decline from age 18 to age 29. That represents about 8,000,000 twenty-somethings alive today who were active church-goers as teenagers but who will no longer be active in a church by their 30th birthday.

..... Millions of twentysomethings are crystallizing their views of life without the input of church leaders, the Bible, or other mature Christians. If we simply wait for them to come back to church later in adulthood, not only will most of those people never return, but also we would miss the chance to alter their life trajectory during a critical phase.

These facts combined with a culture steeped in hyper-individualism, relativism and materialism has fertilized young minds to become predominantly skeptical, distrustful, apathetic and confused of each other and especially their elders. Seismic cultural shifts in the arts, technology and education have put a further wedge between generations. The “generation gap” has become the “generation chasm”.

#### *Symptoms of A “Lost Generation” in Bible Times*

This chasm isn’t unique to our times. During the time of Joshua in Judges, Chapter 2: 7,10-12 it says:

*“The people served the Lord throughout the lifetime of Joshua and of the elders who outlived him and who had seen all the great things the Lord had done in Israel ..... After that generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation grew up, who knew neither the Lord or what he had done for Israel. Then this new generation of Israelites did evil in the eyes of the LORD and served the Baals. They forsook the LORD, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of Egypt. They followed and worshipped various gods of the peoples around them. They provoked the LORD to anger.”*

This passage gets to the very heart of why G2G Ministries exists. It states two major components of how a godless (*i.e. lost*) generation is born. These are:

1. The younger generation “did not know the LORD”
2. The younger generation “did not know what He had done”

#### *Consequences of a Lost Generation*

This waywardness and disobedience had consequences. Consider **Judges 2:20-22**

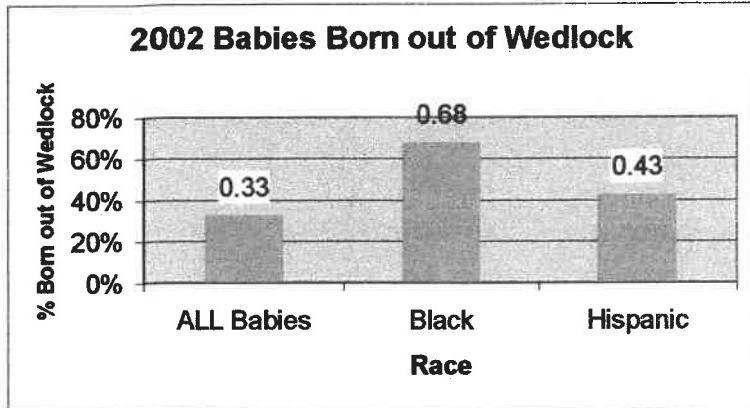
*“Therefore the Lord was very angry with Israel and said, ‘Because this nation has violated the covenant that I laid down for their forefathers and has not listened to me, I will no longer drive out before them any of the nations Joshua left when he died. I will use them to test Israel and see whether they will keep the way of the Lord and walk in it as their forefathers did.”*

the speaker in **Job** goes on to warn those who do not seek God’s advice in chap. 8:11-14

*“can reeds survive without water?” While still growing and uncut, they wither more quickly than grass. Such is the destiny of all who forget God; so perishes the hope of the Godless.*

We can see these consequences today in our culture. Just look at these US Government statistics:

- **Births out of Wedlock Rising:**  
In 2002, 1.365 Million births were out of Wedlock (33%) – an all-time high. From a racial perspective, a staggering 68% of Black babies and 43% of Hispanic were born out-of-wedlock.



- **Poverty in the US is a Reality:** According to the US Census Bureau (2002 – Number in Poverty Rate By Race and Hispanic Origin) nearly one out of every eight (12.1%) of US citizens live below the poverty line. These rates increase to 24.1% for Blacks and 21.8% for Hispanics.

What these statistics really show is that *hope is dying* especially among those in the younger generation.

### *Prescription for Hope*

God never intended for generations to be lost. So how can a lost generation gain hope? We believe all hope is in Christ Jesus. Therefore, our goal is to

1. Help the younger generation **know Christ (Evangelism)**
2. Help the younger generation **know what He has done (Discipleship)**

The older generation must play a key role in helping the younger generation. In Job 8:8 it says:

*"Ask the former generations and find out what their fathers learned"*

The writer in Psalms puts it this way in chapter 145:4:

*"One generation will commend your works to another; they will tell of your mighty acts"*

The older generation brings these 7 valuable legacies to share with the younger generation:

1. Tested & tried Wisdom
2. Tested & tried Traditions
3. Tested & tried Stability
4. Tested & tried Structure
5. Tested & tried Testimonies
6. Tested & tried Discipline
7. Tested & tried Love

The younger generation also brings 7 valuable treasures to share:

1. New High Level of Energy
2. New Life
3. New Ideas and Creativity
4. New Risks and Challenges
5. New Passions and Zeal
6. New Culture
7. New Love

### **G2G's Calling**

The Vision for all Christians is to see all men saved by coming to know Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. The Christian's Mission, then, is to "Go make disciples of all nations". The main Objective of this mission is to build the local church of Jesus Christ for works of service.

Based on this Vision, Mission and Objective, G2G Ministries is called to:

### **R. E. D.**

- A. Reconnect the generations: Pass down the wisdom from one generation to another. **Psalms 145:4**
- B. Evangelize: Teach them to "know the Lord". **Rom. 10:14,15**
- C. Discipleship with the local church: Show them "what the Lord has done" and how to do it. **Matt. 28:19-20**

## MINISTRY METHODS (R.E.D.)

G2G Ministries is committed to Reconnect the Generations

- We partner with local churches and their leaders to encourage them to recruit mentors for our youth
- We connect youth and young adults with the spiritually mature generation at their local church to be discipled
- We provide Discipleship and Mentoring Workshops to Bridge the Generational Gap
- We teach the importance of connecting and learning from the older generation to our young people.

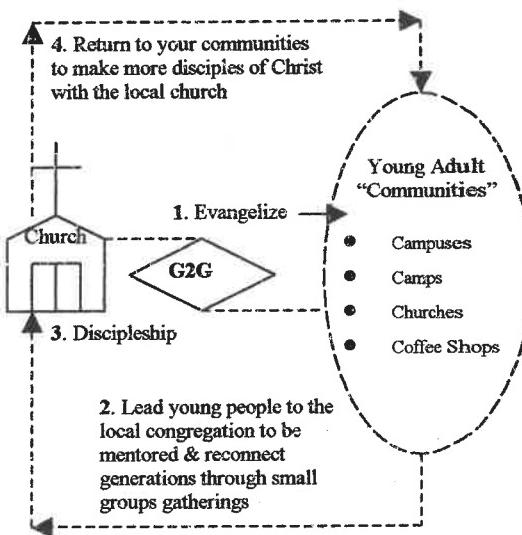
G2G Ministries is committed to urban youth and young adult Evangelism

- We provide evangelism training for our youth and young adult leaders and volunteers.
- We lead weekly Evangelistic Bible Discussion (EBDs) groups on campuses in W. Michigan
- We encourage and challenge young adults to use their evangelistic abilities throughout their day to day encounters
- We hold regular area wide Evangelistic Events in the community geared toward linking young adults to churches to connect the generations.
- We evangelize at various functions such as camps, young adult groups and college and high school campuses

G2G Ministries is committed to Discipleship programs with the local church.

- We “Partner” with bible-believing multi-ethnic, urban churches to connect with “undiscipled” urban young people and link the generations and bridge the Generational Gap
- We provide churches that already have substantial youth/young adult groups with resources to reconnect and recommit the generations within the church.
- We work with churches to provide Urban Serving opportunities such as the recently established “G2G Alliance” program which is a tutoring / mentoring opportunity to connect college students with local inner-city “troubled” high-school students.
- We link local and International churches through involvement in international mission opportunities for young urban people (Guatemala in 2003)
- We encourage our students to *get involved* at their local churches as Sunday School teachers, music & creative arts leaders, workers etc.

### G2G Ministry Model



## Accomplishments & Goals

### 2002

- JR launches ministry in May, 2002
- Established a presence on one campus (Reformed Bible College - RBC)
- Began “partner” relationship with Resurrection Fellowship Church (RFC) (“partner” churches defined as: actively serving with G2G to evangelize & mentor students on & off campus)
- Held first “Student Leadership Retreat”
- 1 Evangelistic Bible Discussion (EBD) is established on campus, 4 student evangelist leaders being mentored by G2G Staff, 10 students being peer mentored

### 2003

- Added Grand Valley State University (GVSU) & Calvin College to roster of campuses. 2 EBDs now on college campuses, 6 college-student evangelist leaders being mentored G2G staff AND Church leaders, 15 college students being peer mentored & 40 regular college student attendees to campus EBDs.
- Continued to grow church partner relationship with RFC. Added 2 mentors who are mentoring students.
- Launched “G2G Alliance” - an Urban Mission initiative. This is a program between G2G, Plainfield United Methodist Church, and the Kent County Juvenile Justice Dept. where G2G students tutor & evangelize to “high risk” high school students who were in the Juvenile Justice system.
- Organized first G2G sponsored student mission trip to Guatemala (3 students sent)
- Held both Spring & Fall student “Leadership Retreats”
- Business Director joins staff in late summer / early fall
- JR increases speaking engagements: including various local church youth groups, local church services and a Christian Camp - Miracle Camp near Kalamazoo
- Nearly 100 students accepted Christ as Savior or re-committed their lives to Christ this year as a result of JR’s speaking engagements

**2004 GOALS (based on proposed budget)****MINISTRY PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT**

- Deepen Relationships on each of our 3 campus ministries (GVSU, RBC, Calvin)
  - 2 EBDs on campuses, 20 student evangelist leaders being mentored mainly by Church leaders, 20 students being peer mentored, 50 regular student attendees to campus EBDs
- Add a 2<sup>nd</sup> Church partner to join with us in mentoring and ministering on campuses.
- Organize 2 student mission trips (Guatemala II + Romania); plus 2 new country mission opportunities being researched (Bolivia + Kenya)
- Starting a radio "Talk Show" with a local AM Urban station in March, 2004
- Continue & Grow Urban Mission Initiative (tutoring mentoring HS students) from 6 to 15 students
- Hold a G2G Student Crusade event in Grand Rapids in late summer / early fall
- Increase JR's speaking engagements from 1 per month to 2 per month.
- Develop "fresh" web-site that attracts students & mentors.

**CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT**

- Develop curriculum "shell" for 1) Ministry foundation 2) Churches 3) Students 4) Mentors
- Create Video / Multi-media material for G2G Intro to Donors/Churches & curriculum themes

**BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT**

- Broaden fund raising capability:
  - Donor follow-up system in place
  - Recruit more monthly (regular givers). Church & Individual campaigns
  - Increase awareness to large "lump-sum" donors thru more one-on-one meetings & activities (golf, dessert with G2G, and Art Show fund raisers)
- Network all computer systems, establish data back-up system, and implement internet based data-base system for communication campaigns (newsletter, direct mail, etc.)
- Add an administrative assistant to staff (3 people total)

**FUNDING****MINISTRY BUDGET FOR 2004**

Staff Salaries (2.5 FTE staff)	\$98,000
Payroll Taxes (FICA + Medicaid)	7,500
Retirement Benefits	5,500
Health Care	7,200
Insurance/Liability	700
Professional & Banking Fees	1,000
Mileage/Travel Expenses	2,500
Telephone + Internet	2,800
Office Supplies	3,000
Marketing / Printing	2,500
Conferences/Seminars/Education	2,000
Postage	1,500
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$134,200</b>

*Every gift continues to help us reach students with the powerful message of Jesus Christ. Generation to Generation Ministries is a MI 501-C3 Non-profit organization. All contributions are tax deductible.*

**APPENDIX B**  
**HOMEWORK REQUEST**

STUDENT INFORMATION								
Student ID:						206 E	CBH01	

Course	Sec	Name	Schedule	Terms	Weeks	Room#	Teacher	Schl
BA212	01	ACCOUNTING PRI	MTR1	S1	1	113	COOK	CBH03
ASUPT	01	ACADEMIC SUPPO	MTWR10-12	F	1	TBA	PARKHURST	CBH01
HS115	03	AFRICAN AMER H	MWF2	S1	1	114	PARKHURST	CBH01
EN413	01	AP ENGLISH 12-	MTR3	S1	1	211	LYONS	CBH01
CM213	03	CHEMISTRY I-1	MWF4	S1	1	230	SMITH	CBH01
PY311	03	PSYCHOLOGY I-1	MTR5	S1	1	206	HAGGAI	CBH01
MA511	04	PRE-CALCULUS I	MWF6	S1	1	001	AUSTIN	CBH01
GE271	05	SEMINAR II-1	TWRF7	S1	1	211	LYONS	CBH01

**HOMEWORK  
REQUEST**

**DATE** \_\_\_\_\_

**Reason for Absence:** (Sick) - (Out of Town) - (Suspension) - (Other)  
(CIRCLE ONE)

**Time request was made:** \_\_\_\_\_ a.m./p.m. **Request made by:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Time in mailbox:** \_\_\_\_\_ a.m./p.m. **Placed in mailbox by:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Teacher Name:** **SEE SCHEDULE ABOVE**

**Please Send Assignments For:** \_\_\_\_\_

**To the Counseling Office by:** \_\_\_\_\_  
(Assignments-should be delivered to the counseling office and placed in the mail boxes by last name.)

**Assignments are needed for** \_\_\_\_\_ **days.**

M-\_\_\_\_\_ T-\_\_\_\_\_ W-\_\_\_\_\_ TH-\_\_\_\_\_ F-\_\_\_\_\_

**Notes:**

**APPENDIX C**

**PLAINFIELD UNITED METHODIST CHURCH CONGREGATIONAL SURVEY**

- 1. To what degree has the Generation-to-Generation Tutoring Program furthered ethnic integration at Plainfield United Methodist Church worship services?**
  1. none
  2. slight
  3. moderate
  4. great
- 2. To what degree has the Generation-to-Generation Tutoring Program furthered ethnic integration at Plainfield United Methodist Church fellowship events?**
  1. none
  2. slight
  3. moderate
  4. great
- 3. Over the past year, how has your attitude changed toward Plainfield United Methodist Church?**
  1. much worse
  2. worse
  3. same
  4. better
  5. much better
- 4. What impact has the Generation-to-Generation Tutoring Program had on the overall ministry of Plainfield United Methodist Church?**
  1. very negative
  2. negative
  3. none
  4. positive
  5. very positive
- 5. Has your involvement level at Plainfield United Methodist Church changed over the past year?**
  1. less involved
  2. the same
  3. more involved

## GLOSSARY

**Charismatic Renewal.** For the purposes of this document, Charismatic Renewal encompasses both the Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements. The emphases of the spiritual gifts in the congregant's lives and corporate worship are the unifying beliefs that are being addressed in this project.

**Collaboration.** Collaboration is the process of two or more organizations formally agreeing to work on a program together. Collaboration is formal in nature, often resulting in the creation of a joint program to achieve a particular goal. Collaboration is not partnership, which is a merger of two or more organizations to achieve an agreed goal; nor is collaboration coordination, which is two or more organizations agreeing not to compete or reproduce the other's efforts; nor is collaboration cooperation which is less formal but an agreement to work toward an agreed upon goal.

**Missio Dei.** A missiological concept literally translated as the mission of God. *Missio Dei* is holistic in nature and encompasses both social action and evangelism; it encompasses the reign of God in its entirety.

**Program.** For the purposes of this document, program refers to the Generation-to-Generation Tutoring Program. The program functions as the primary act of intervention in bringing congregational renewal and ethnic integration to Plainfield United Methodist Church.

**Project.** The project is the Doctor of Ministry project that has the goal of bringing congregational renewal and ethnic integration to Plainfield United Methodist Church.

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